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PLAIN LETTERS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

BY JONATHAN FARR.

B O S T O N ,
L E O N A R D C . B O W L E S .
B . H . G R E E N E , A N D G R A Y & B O W E N .
1831.

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INTRODUCTORY EPISTLE

TO THE READER.

It is proper that my first letter should be addressed immediately to you, that I may excite your curiosity, fix your attention, and conciliate your favor.

Are you a profound scholar? Then regard with a candid eye these humble efforts of one who is not. Let not the following pages awaken your jealousy and envy, or provoke your critical severity. If you are not instructed, you may be admonished by these letters. They certainly contain some things infinitely worthy of your time and thoughts. You may have read many larger volumes, classically pure and elegant, pleasing to the fancy and transporting to the soul, but which have seldom quickened your memory of those things, which belong to your peace.

But if you have already had the wisdom to attend to these things, then, no doubt, I shall receive from you all the notice and applause, which I deserve or desire. You will see what I am aiming at; *and I hope you will bid me God*

speed. The volume will do you no good. But it may enable you to do much good to others, who might even by such a clue be guided out of the labyrinth in which they are kept. You can recommend, and circulate it.

Do you belong to any of those sects or denominations, whose doctrines and behaviour I have often spoken of with disapprobation? Whatever be your creed, if you are pious, virtuous, humble, candid and charitable——christian reader, the rebuke is not meant for you. I know most amiable and excellent persons, who are connected with these very churches, whose errors, conduct, and bad spirit, I have plainly pointed out. You will not be offended at me, my dear reader, unless it is one article of your creed, that there can be no sin and iniquity within your church; that there is no unholy and unrighteous person, who belongs to your denomination, and subscribes to your faith. Whether you are good or bad yourself, you cannot believe thus. I wish you to bear this in mind, whatever be your name,—that if you truly have the spirit, the mind, the meekness and gentleness of Christ; if you exercise the godliness, virtue and charity, enjoined in the gospel; then *you* are free, and are not implicated in these remarks and censures.

Are you a Trinitarian? Many Trinitarians do I love and honor; not because they hold that *mysterious*, and, to me, unscriptural doctrine:

but because they hold it in the exercise of a tolerant and charitable spirit.

Are you an Episcopalian? There are those among the departed, and also among the living, of whom I cherish most pleasing remembrances. Sweet friends ! I have regretted that, your book of Common Prayer was not much more evangelical in doctrine than it is. Beauties and excellences it has; but its defects are plain, and painful to many a lover of truth, and a trouble to those, who desire to worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Are you a Baptist? It has been my privilege to meet with those, in whose company I forgot that there was any separating wall between even a Unitarian and a Baptist. I have said little or nothing about your peculiar sentiments or conduct. If you are even tempered, habitually pious, and kind to others, as a debtor to grace should be, you will be pleased and profited by this volume.

Are you a Methodist? My acquaintance with many of your denomination has made a favorable impression on my heart. You have some doctrines, in my opinion, not taught by the Saviour, and you have too much passion, groaning, noise, and extravagance. I like your cheerful, and lively piety; and wish that your cheerfulness and life might be connected with more soberness, discretion and stability. I have *liked that catholic spirit*, which you manifest at

your communion seasons, inviting professors of all denominations to what you, very properly and consistently, call the ‘Lord’s table, not yours!’ Twentyfive years ago, I was present at one of your meetings, and was so charmed with this trait of your character, that I have not forgotten that sacramental occasion yet. The language of the altar; the words of the hymn, which filled up the intervals of time, while some were leaving and others were approaching the altar; the tune, simple, but touching; the whole scene I remember distinctly.

Your people have often given me the impression, that they thought the world large enough to contain all the followers of Wesley, (though numerous) together with a great multitude of other denominations; that a person may have a pious heart and a good conscience, and savingly follow Christ, though he do not wholly follow you;—that there may be good persons out of your church, who will be received up into heaven. I have had many a pleasing interview with Christians of your sect. You, I trust, will find but few reasons for disliking, and many for liking these letters, which I have published with the hope and desire to promote the spiritual good of men; and to build up the pure and peaceful kingdom of our blessed Saviour.

Are you a Calvinist? You will find frequent mention of the doctrines and spirit of your sect *in these pages*. You may feel alarmed for the

dignity of the name. You may feel bound to resent, discredit or disregard, what I have said, on account of your brethren, if not on your own account. I hope, however, that you are such a friend to truth and charity, that you will be willing to have the errors and sins of even your own party detected, and, if possible, reformed.

Though I have pointed out what I accounted errors in the faith of many Christians, yet I have not asserted my own infallibility; nor written an anathema on the creed of any one. But the temper and conduct of many Calvinists I have spoken of, in the grave, the earnest, and the solemn language, which becomes a disciple and minister of Jesus Christ, who, lamblike, meek, lowly, and gentle, as he was, sometimes looked around him with a holy indignation.

I trust there are thousands, who, though they assent to the Calvinistic doctrines, sacredly abhor the Calvinistic spirit. If you, dear reader, possess the virtues and graces of him, who should be your Master, you will not, I think, be offended at my animadversions on dispositions and practices, contrary to, and expressly forbidden by the gospel of Christ. There are those, and I believe not by any means a few, of your sect, who heartily disapprove of the very things, of which I have spoken with disapprobation. They have told me, they have told many so.

Are you Orthodox? I mean in the *conventional, or technical* sense of that word. In the

language of these evil and contentious times, do you belong to the Orthodox party? You will find in these letters some notice taken of your party, their measures, conduct, spirit, &c. But if you are orthodox also in the highest, most important, and gospel sense of that term, you will, I trust, not be angry with me; but lament, as I do, the blindness or the sinfulness but too manifest in some of those who make great professions of sanctity of heart, and soundness of faith.

I have as good evidence as I desire, that not a small number of those who have assumed, or inherited the name Orthodox, reject the doctrines generally which I reject, or attach no vital importance to them; and that a large proportion of the party are not chargeable with the vices and sins, which I have at times mentioned. Orthodoxy signifies rather a 'side' or party in religious contention, than any particular system of faith, or set of opinions.

I seldom meet with an 'Orthodox' person, who is, on inquiry, really a Trinitarian or a Calvinist.

You may hear those who call themselves orthodox, and attach great importance to the word, and think Unitarians no Christians, and destitute of any reasonable hope of Heaven,—*who will still deny the doctrine of total depravity, election, predestination, the damnation of infants, (what an expression !)* the doctrine of

imputed sin, and imputed righteousness, the Calvinistic view of the atonement, and the doctrine of the trinity. Such things strengthen and increase my convictions that a worldly spirit, to an alarming degree, actuates the Orthodox as a party.

You may also hear many of those who are ranged under orthodox banners, expressing the most generous and charitable sentiments towards Unitarians. Many of them confess that they are entangled and caught—they confess that they had misunderstood our character and doctrines. They dislike the measures and spirit of the party; and would be glad to have Christians of all denominations treated with justice, respect, and brotherly kindness.

I hope you are such, dear reader. If you are not, it highly concerns you to examine yourself, whether you are in the faith, and have truly 'put on Christ.'

I have been long and variously connected with those called Orthodox. I have had many opportunities to know them, not only by report, but personally;—to know much of their conduct, temper, and character. Providence has so placed them near me frequently, that they had ample room to make exhibitions of their graces—to manifest their moderation, humility, candor, and christian love. And I bear a *pleasing record* of many. As to others of a contrary

description, I pray that they may be renewed in the temper of their mind, and that they may have just views of that cross, which they must take and bear, if they would follow Christ.

I have, for several years, been a most interested spectator of the conduct and spirit of your party. I have bitterly felt the influence of these things, as a man, as a member of society, as a friend to the civil, social, and domestic welfare of the community, as a believer in Christianity, and, for these eight or ten years past, as a preacher of the blessed gospel. I have been shocked at many of the scenes, which have come within my view—shocked at that moral lethargy, too often discoverable in your adherents; shocked at either that ignorance, stupidity, and blindness, or that perverseness and iniquity, of which you have given many disgusting, humiliating, and lamentable indications. I have been often shocked at your apparent want of moral feeling and principle---at the torpor of your conscience, and the morbid action of your piety. That you should put in such claims to a right faith, to a new heart, to a heavenly birth, to a well-grounded hope, and to being the true followers of Christ; and yet discover so much pride, craft, arrogance and uncharitableness, has to me seemed truly a *awful thing*.

Sir, I have ever belonged to that class of citizens denominated poor, and I have, with

dignation and grief, beheld, as I thought, a few who had nothing to distinguish them from the herd, except easier circumstances, a little more subtlety and learning, a little more fluency of speech, and a little more time and money at their command—or, that they were strangers, restless, self-complacent, and meddlesome;—Sir, I have beheld these, with indignation and grief, setting the poor, the ignorant, the credulous, the feeble, the unfortunate, the afflicted, the sober, laboring, industrious people of our country—setting them most vilely and cruelly by the ears!

Here is a feeble, poor widow, with a number of children, dependant on their daily exertions for sustenance, and those exertions interrupted and diminished by many infirmities and trials. They need the help of nature's ties, and the bond of Christian love, and the solace of friendly and holy communion with one another, and with all about them. A religionist—shall I call him a gospel preacher, a son of consolation, a herald of glad tidings, a publisher of peace?—comes among them, and alienates, embitters, divides, scatters them. They grow cold, unsocial, suspicious and uncharitable to each other. They have different creeds, guides, altars, churches, and companions. The *unhappy creatures* now make it their glory to *hate, and be hated by, one another. They think they have increased in religion, whe*

they have become more blind, or hard-hearted.

They might walk hand in hand through life, happily and respectably, sustaining and cherishing each other. But their piety renders it expedient, that they should live remote from each other, where they are pinched, or supplied as they need not be, had the gospel made them what they should be.

But why paint scenes familiar to so many eyes, and to so many hearts too?

While many are thinking the present a glorious day in the annals of the church, I have often been led to think it a day of great religious darkness, and of the most unblushing and heaven-daring baseness.

I confess, in my heart I have felt but little veneration for some of those men, clerically educated, named, and appareled, whose voices are often heard, where should be heard the voice of peace, love, mercy, salvation—felt no more veneration for the men, who sow the seeds of hatred and disunion through the land, than I do for an Alexander or a Bonaparte. A pity it is, that they should use their time and genius in making trouble among the common people, bringing them into a most dishonorable bondage.

I have watched these things with sorrow of heart. I have had my fears, that Orthodoxy *was the wooden horse, which the people were pulling into their republic, about to trample*

them under its feet. I have had my fears, that Orthodoxy was but a great political machine, or engine of ambition, bearing a Cross for its device, but a globe darkly shaded above it.

You may ask the reasons. Many of its leaders show the temper, the spirit; they use the language and weapons of the world.

I confess, I want the evidence, that some of these persons have any serious regard for either the spiritual, eternal, or temporal welfare of their fellowmen; that they have a deep and settled piety; that they have a practical faith in a righteous retribution after death,—orthodox, and searching, and sons of thunder as they may be styled.

It has seemed to me that ambition, avarice, distinction, love of power and dominion, love of novelty, change, and excitement; or, in brief, that a carnal mind, and a worldly kingdom lay at the bottom of many of the religious schemes, works, and enterprises of the day. I have compared some of the busy men of the christian world now with religious champions of former years, who are still known and painfully remembered for those exhibitions of genius and passion, upon which the gospel pronounces but few benedictions.

I write boldly and earnestly. The cause demands it. I allude to evils, I have seen and felt. I have had many opportunities to know what an influence Orthodoxy could exert

communities and on individuals. How often have those burning prayers, and flaming sermons *cooled* social affections, congealed friendly and christian sympathies, frozen up the charities of life ! Is it divine grace, that comes with such gloom and frowns ? Is it divine love that so contracts and withers ? Is the peace of God within, and without so many signs of war ?

If you belong to the 'Orthodox party,' and are one of a certain character, you may be displeased with some things, I have said ; but why should you ? Do you not wish to increase your numbers, strength, and reputation ? But whatever there is wrong in your faith, practice, or spirit, must be, on the whole, injurious to you. You might know that wise and good men have viewed some of the doctrines you hold, as errors—some of your dispositions and behaviour, and some of your modes of proselyting, as unlovely and unjustifiable. And knowing this, you ought to inquire, you ought to examine;—to examine the spirit by which you are led and actuated. In a little time, it will not be the question, 'to what and how large a party do I belong ?' but am I on the Lord's side ?

• Let me say a word to you in regard to your late mode of distributing tracts. Is it generous ? Is it manly ? Is it christian ? Is it working *by the golden rule* ? What would be the consequences, if every denomination should adopt and pursue such measures ? You are a Con-

gregationalist and Calvinist. Suppose that only ten different sects should visit you monthly with tracts of their peculiar doctrines; or tracts artfully written to prevent suspicion, and lure you into what you had accounted error. If you paid the desired attention to all, or to a part, what would be the probable influence on your mind and heart? What would be the religion of your family? Would not your house become a Babel rather than a Bethel?

And suppose, that in addition to these Christian sects, others who are opposed to all forms of the gospel should practise on the same system. For, you must know that there are some, at the present day, opposed to Christianity, who think, speak and write against it. What would you say, were they to thrust in their books and tracts, in your manner, and into your own house? Think what would be the unhappy and distracted state of things, should every one follow your example? And why is not the same course as justifiable in others, as in you?

Will you say, 'we disseminate truth; they, error?' How do you know that you are perfect in knowledge, and infallible? It may be that the tract, your right hand holds out to your neighbor, teaches a lie!

Many sober and judicious people of your own party discountenance this procedure. Many Unitarians have privately and publicly expostulated with you. They have made appeal

which ought to have been listened to with candor. They have made requests so reasonable, and made them so kindly too, that they ought to have been granted even by christians.

I have no doubt this your course is wrong; and that either a dying bed or a future tribunal will tell you so with a voice too loud to be unheard, and too solemn to be unfelt.

Again, are you Orthodox? Let me speak to you about these four-days meetings which sadly distinguish the present time. 'What are they for?' is often the earnest cry. Perhaps you are one of the ignorant and excited multitude, and harbor not a thought but that the whole is the great power and work of God.

These meetings, you may be told, or may imagine, are solely designed to gather lost sheep into the fold of Christ; to awaken those who are spiritually dead; to build up the holy and heavenly kingdom of the Redeemer.

How can you think so? Yea, how can you continue to think so, with the gospel of peace and love by your side, and with the opposing evidence which you may gain, if you look around, and seriously inquire? There may be other motives to these meetings besides Christ's cause, and the soul's eternal good.

You think you are engaged in religion; but, *I believe*, if you watch and observe, you will *find* your party doing, saying, feeling, too often, *as the Saviour would not*. I have thought that

these four-days meetings were to give success to certain dogmas, and certain men. I have thought, Sir, that preferment, distinction, money, passion, nay, malice and revenge, might set the wheels of such a machine in motion. The history of the church is a 'doleful scroll.' After the lapse of so many centuries, it is no phenomenon, if we find a man reputed Orthodox and pious, whose conduct proves him neither.

Are you one of the 'better sort?' Have you acquired, and are you exerting a great influence in your party? O remember that the day is coming, when every secret thing will be brought to light; when it shall be seen how faithfully you have endeavored to know and follow the gospel! If you are striving to build up only an earthly kingdom, in a little while it will be dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel.

No doubt these meetings will be overruled for good to many; so were the martial achievements of a Bonaparte. Many will become more thoughtful and devout; and so, it is likely they would by war, or any disastrous event. And perhaps they would make greater progress in true religion and virtue, without these helps; certainly they might.

I will mention some of the probable consequences of these meetings. A great deal of time *spent in sacrifice* which should have been *spent in works of mercy*; a great deal of time *wasted*, which should have been spent in a prof

itable manner. Many of those who attend, need the time to pay just debts, or to make reasonable provision for the future. A great deal of idle curiosity excited and indulged; a great deal of bad temper and passion displayed to individual and social injury; the prejudices and hostilities of many against religion increased; many confirmed in error and delusion; many more led into it; the number of the dissipated, dispirited, melancholy, desponding, enthusiastic, deranged, crazy, fearfully enlarged; many children, especially females, led away from their parents; many wives, in affection and religion separated from their husbands; many social and kindred ties broken; more confusion, surmises, slanders, and hatred in towns; more houses, where discord and strife bear sway.

But why do I think to enumerate the evils of these enterprises? As well might I attempt to enumerate all the evils of a war. Indeed, the whole affair seems to me more like a war for earthly conquest and human glory, than an effort to evangelize the world in obedience to that Saviour, revealed to us in the New Testament.

But I must be brief. If you are what you should be, the reproof is not to you; and if you are not, my supplication is, that you may be admonished, and reformed. Whether you wish to build up your own, or Christ's kingdom, it seems to me that some of your means and mea-

tures are not right. Christ does not tell you to fight for him thus.

Are you a Universalist? I have been much more catholic and charitable to you than you may imagine, unless you read me candidly and patiently through. I have had much intercourse with those of your sect, and could easily speak many things in their favor; and as it respects myself, I have seldom had those reasons to complain of you, which I have to complain of some other sects. In my ministerial labors these many years, I have received many attentions from you, and I know not now the instance, where you have molested me. I have been frank to tell you where we differed; but I have never thought to usurp authority over you. I have noted some of your errors, and tried to correct them. Many of your people are very fond of reasoning and controversy—very prompt and forward to declare their peculiar sentiments, and very free to show their theological skill in defending them. I do not consider denouncing Universalists as the most certain evidence of one's being a child of God. Your freedom and love of debate have sometimes made it proper for me to reply. I am not inquisitive about peculiarities. If I witness a pious and virtuous life, I am not so restless about the creed. When people of any denomination have shown this fondness for talk and dispute, I have endeavored to let them know that I took but lit-

the pleasure in a religion of words ; I have endeavored to fix their attention on the importance of a holy, a righteous, and useful life. My desire has been not to wound, but to benefit you.

Before closing this long epistle, it may be proper to inform the reader how this volume was composed and collected. I began to write these letters sometime after I began my professional duties ; and almost all of them have lain by me these two years past. They grew out of the various circumstances, in which I was placed, while engaged in clerical labors. The long time which I spent 'unsettled,' gave me advantages which I endeavored to improve. My frequent change of place brought me into contact with a larger number of men, and with a greater variety of characters. I was often thrown among strangers ; and also among strangers to my views of religion. In such situations I have tried to get good, and do good. I have spent many of my leisure and solitary hours in writing down the thoughts, which had been suggested by a call, a visit, or an interview. I thought that by thus occupying some of my time, I might render my intercourse with my fellow-men more and more profitable. I have sought opportunities in my various walks to exert a moral and religious influence on those, into whose company I happened to fall.

I have gone home to my study frequently, and with my pen continued to reason, expostu-

late, advise or comfort. In retirement, and on paper, I have spoken with more freedom and force. I have said what was forgotten in the presence of others ; and what was kept back for want of time or confidence.

Some of these letters, in a varied form, were actually sent ; some others were written with an intention to send them, but circumstances prevented.

As they were written in different places, and at different times, they easily recall to my mind events and persons, which I would not forget ; and I have often read them to revive scenes and impressions, which I would not have fade.

A few months ago, it occurred to me that they might form a useful volume for circulation. I reviewed and revised them with the hope of their doing good. It was an easy thing to write these letters, when they were written. The occasions which called them forth gave my feelings and thoughts a strong impulse. But it has cost me much labor to prepare them for the press, whatever may be thought of them. Every sentence has been weighed and examined, not with the vain thought of literary praise or distinction, but with the solemn thought of my accountability to God. /

I have altered and added but little ; so that *if anything seems severe and harsh, it has but a poor title to the apology of being said in haste*
Reader, whatever be your mode of faith or

worship, the design of these letters is to bring you nearer to Christ, to God and to Heaven ; to make you more holy, virtuous and happy ; to quicken your faith, your obedience and charity. That such may be its happy influence on you, is the earnest prayer of your friend,

THE AUTHOR.

Gardner, Mass. August, 1831.

PLAIN LETTERS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

LETTER I.

My dear friend,

I have often taken pleasure in reviewing the time, I spent with you. I say it without flattery ; in your neat and modest mansion I was happy. Your situation, your mode of life, your family, all pleased me. And now, as a testimony of my respect and esteem for you, and of my grateful remembrance of your hospitality, I shall cheerfully comply with your request at my departure. Yes, I will write, and write on those subjects, which occupied so much of our time, when we were together.

Religious conversation was not disagreeable to you, nor will religious letters be uninteresting to a mind cultivated and inquisitive like yours. We said much about the doctrines of Christianity, and the great variety of opinion there is among professed Christians. You thought it strange, that there should be such wide differences on a subject so important; and that all these jarring opinions should apparently be drawn from, and supported by Scripture. *But the better acquainted you become with the*

human heart and mind, and with the history of man, the less will you wonder. And when you know the real state of the case, you will find the differences not so great and alarming, as you apprehended. There is a dark and a bright side to almost everything. In the various denominations there are points of resemblance, as well as of dissimilitude. A little more light and love seem to be all that is wanting to unite many, who are now strangers to one another.

It is true, the various denominations of Christians differ in many things. Open Hannah Adams' Dictionary of Religions. See by how many names believers are now called! Paul mentions four bands. One saith, I am of Paul; another, I of Apollos; another, I of Cephas; and another, I of Christ. If these divisions were signs of their being carnal, how are such signs multiplied now! For now, how greatly is the catalogue increased! I am of St Augustin; I, of Benedict; I, of Luther; I, of Calvin; I, of Arius; I, of Socinus; I, of Arminius; I, of Wesley; I, of Penn; I, of Ann Lee; I, of Hopkins; I, of Swedenborg;—but I shall weary you with their names.

They are designated by places and persons; by forms of government; by customs and rites; and by peculiar doctrines. So, one is a *Papist*; another, a *Protestant*. One is an *Episcopalian*; another, a *Presbyterian*; a third, *Congregationalist*. So, there are *Baptists*, a

Anabaptists, and Free-will Baptists, and Quakers, and Shakers, and Methodists. So, again, there are Trinitarians and Unitarians. You know the Catholic by his cross; the Quaker by his yes and no, and the Shaker by his yea and nay; and both of these by their peculiar dress. Many fashions, usages, and phrases are appropriated and peculiar, and you may soon discover to what sect an individual belongs.

They differ in their church discipline and government; in their modes of worship and instruction. So you hear of popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, friars, curates; archbishops, primates, deacons, elders; conclaves, synods, consistories, sessions, associations; connexions, conferences, yearly and quarterly, and camp meetings.

They differ in their modes of worship. Enter a Roman catholic church. See how genius, art and wealth are consecrated to religion. See how these sacred courts of God are decorated and adorned. Here is the font of holy water. Here is the richly furnished altar. Here are crosses and crucifixés, paintings and statues. See how many emblems of religion are here; how many mementos of piety! Observe the splendid dress of the priest! Hear the organ! *Hear them chanting their prayers and praises, and reading the scriptures in Latin! Mark their solemnity and devotion! How humble, serious attentive, engaged!*

Now enter a Quaker meeting house. Your eye discovers nothing but plainness and simplicity. The worshippers sit in deep silence, watching and waiting for the moving and teaching of the Spirit. You see no works of the cunning artificer, no instruments of music, no signs of worldly grandeur and distinction. They are Friends.

Leave them, and go into a Shaker church. They too are Christians, but how differently do they appear. See what neatness and order reign here. The fashion and color of their garments, every expression of their faces, remind you of quite another order of beings, than you have ever associated with. Hear them sing. This is music which inspires and elevates the soul. Observe childhood, and youth, and tottering old age go forth in the dance. They are crucified and dead to the world. They have travelled out of sin. Hear how earnestly they exhort the people of the world to take the cross, and enter upon a spiritual, holy life !

Now go to the Episcopal church. The learned bishop will not even pronounce the blessing without fixing his eye on the book of Common Prayer; and his sermon, though not half an hour long, has, perhaps, cost him weeks of painful study.

Next turn in here. You will listen to no printed, no written, no premeditated prayer. The *Scriptures* are not read, and the preacher plainly tells you, that he had not thought of his text, till ascending the pulpit!

One will use nothing but the Latin language in the service of the sanctuary ; another uses the most vulgar style of his vernacular tongue.

Christians differ also in their modes of enforcing religious instruction. Some reason, exhort, and expostulate; others scold, and threaten. Some address the understanding chiefly ; others, the passions. Some alarm men's fears; others attempt to draw them by entreaty, by hope and love.

But they differ also in doctrine. They do not interpret the word of God alike. Examine the creeds and confessions of faith, drawn up by the various sects and churches—and also by individuals belonging to these sects. What an endless variety ! Still there is more harmony of opinion among them, no doubt, than either they or you imagine. Were it not for their ignorance, prejudice and sins, there would be more union. They all agree in the existence, unity and perfect goodness of God—that the Old and New Testaments contain revelations of his mind and will to man. They generally profess to draw their religious light and knowledge from this volume ; except that some add a part of the Apocrypha, the commandments of their own church, or what they assert to be new and later revelations. They are all fleeing from misery or hell, and seeking happiness or heaven. They generally hold, that we are saved by the grace and mercy of

God, and that this grace and mercy are conveyed to us from the Father by or through the mediation of the Son.

They agree, that we should deal justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God; live sober, righteous and pious lives; that we should do to others, as we would that they should do to us; that we should obey the laws of God and the precepts of the Saviour; that we should love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves; that we should imitate God and Christ in all their imitable perfections. They agree, that in order to see God and be happy, we must be holy and righteous--that we must repent of our sins and forsake them, and live a life of faith, virtue, and prayer. No doubt, the more serious of them would confess these things generally. And there is, after all, much agreement in their views of the moral character of God and Christ. Notwithstanding what Trinitarians say when defending their peculiar doctrines, at other times they more generally give you the impression that they do not practically believe that the Son is coeval and co-equal with the Father; and to a prayer that is offered to the Father in the name of, or through the Son, the pious, I believe, of most denominations, can respond amen, without offending their conscience or their creed.

You will readily perceive, that their points of agreement are many, and of the utmost importance. Their differences are about things not so clearly revealed, if revealed at all;—things

about which it would be their wisdom to confess their ignorance, and their piety and peace to let them alone. Remember what should be the great object of all your inquiries, and the tendency and result of all your endeavors, viz. to be holy and glorify God. That you may know and pursue the way of eternal life, is the prayer of your friend.

LETTER II.

My dear friend,

I shall write without much order, and give you my thoughts just as they occur to me.

We often speak of the moral tendency of different systems and doctrines. The Papists charge the Protestants with holding demoralizing doctrines; and the Protestants boldly return the charge. So, of all the various sects. But happily for us, there are restraints and limits--counteracting powers, and redeeming influences. Conscience, reason, the light of nature, the light of divine truth, and many other things, set bounds to error and delusion.

Men cannot, or dare not, act out all their opinions. They dispute about them; they write *them in their creeds*; but do not so generally *reduce them to practice*. Different denomina-

tions are brought into contact with each other. The influence they exert is often reciprocal. They gradually infuse into each other much of their feelings and sentiments. The Churchman catches some of the ardor of the Methodist; and the Presbyterian is softened by the mildness of the Quaker. The Universalist cannot subdue all fear of hell, though it is not in his creed. The Calvinist may be sometimes saved from despondency by hearing the goodness and mercy of God so strongly urged by the Universalist. One thing is set over against another. One excess naturally begets another. If one will continually speak of the wrath, the vengeance, and sovereignty of God, as though there were no morally amiable qualities in the divine character; it is not strange that another should be indignant at finding infinite perfections so mistaken or misrepresented, and speak of God as a good, a gracious and merciful Father; that his zeal and imagination should drive him to an opposite extreme, and, like his neighbor, darken the light of God's word, and, in the minds of men, sully the moral brightness and glory of Jehovah's character. They both, sometimes, give such views of the attributes and government of God, that an intelligent and virtuously disposed being would have but little reason to rejoice that such a God lived and reigned. They both seem to forget the moral and paternal character of the *ever blessed and eternal God*.

But there are motives and tendencies to union as well as to discord. The ignorant, proud, and passionate of every denomination, are apt to be bigoted, censorious, suspicious and uncharitable. The wisest and best are apt to be mild, candid, and charitable. Their differences are not so great, nor esteemed so important. I dare say, could Fenelon, Doddridge, Watts, Sir Isaac Newton, Locke, Addison, and Wesley, have come together on an uninhabited island, their social intercourse and social worship would not have been prevented by their religious opinions.

All Christians consent to use the Lord's prayer; they can all say, amen, to it. But how many prayers have been made by men, which are not generally received. The apostles' creed is so scriptural, and catholic, that most denominations of Christians would acknowledge it with some very trifling explanations or amendments. It is not probable that it was framed by the apostles, as has been pretended; but it is certain that it is one of the oldest christian creeds that have come down to us. Yet no threatening or admonitory words are placed over it, to show its importance, and the immense danger of rejecting it. The Nicene creed is later and more objectionable; but still no penal clause is prefixed to it. But when you come to the Athanasian creed, so full of mystery and contradiction—so long—so dark—so abstruse and subtle; which reminds

you of almost everything but the light and simplicity of the gospel ; when you come to this creed—why, there you are told at the outset, that if you do not believe it, you shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly ! You can make your own reflections on these things. It is worth while to observe, that this creed, which it would seem by the threatening prefixed to it, is the most important of the three, was omitted by those who altered the book of Common Prayer to suit it to the church in the United States. I might draw some inferences from this, but there is no need of it. May the Bible be your creed, and your whole life a proof and commendation of it ! So prays truth's friend, and yours.

LETTER III.

My dear friend,

You will find this no bad description of many families, at the present day. The husband, stupid and indifferent to religion, or perhaps inclined to Deism ; the wife, a violent Calvinist, attending all the meetings she can, joining all the societies, that will admit her as a member ; one daughter, a Baptist ; another, a Methodist ; one son a rake or vagabond, another a Universalist.

The parents began life gay and thoughtless. *The wife was solitary or afflicted, and sought*

comfort in religion; her husband was with those who diverted his thoughts from God. He was unfortunate. It increased the ardor of his wife, and led him into low and profligate company. His children were, of course, poor, and placed at service, and caught the opinions of their masters and associates.

Where there is one in a family who is a Deist, or despiser of religion, there I not unfrequently find a religionist. If one is a rigid and meddling Calvinist, another is probably a Universalist. I met a person a few days ago, who had grown old in the neglect of religion; he seldom went to meeting, but his daughter had become a Baptist.

I have found not a few of the rigid and zealous Calvinists were the passionate, the unfortunate, the disappointed, the gloomy, the unmarried, and the childless. In catholic countries such persons often repair to monasteries, convents, and nunneries; and in this country, some join the Shakers, but more embrace the harsh doctrines of Calvin; and make religion, not only a serious, but an unsocial and melancholy thing. The change of religious sentiments with a change of circumstances and prospects, is often, probably, the effect of pride. The person wishes to throw off as much of the blame of his past impiety, as possible. By choosing a new place of worship, a new teacher, or new doctrines, he would give the impression, that

the fault was not in him, but in his situation, and advantages ; when the fact probably was, that he had abused the privileges and mercies he had formerly enjoyed. There were pious persons in the society he left, and why might not he have been one of them ? I suspect that it is frequently the case, that those who treat their former religious advantages with such contempt, used to treat religion itself but little better formerly.

While Mr M. was prosperous in his worldly affairs, he gave but few evidences of a pious heart or a moral life. He and his family were people of fashion---handsome, accomplished; rich, and fond of all those pleasures, which were not scandalous ; and sometimes almost sinned against the rules of a gay and modish life. On the sabbath Mr M.'s carriage stood at Mr X.'s church, where, though he was not taught Calvinism nor trinitarianism, yet he was taught repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ---taught to live a sober, righteous, godly, spiritual, prayerful, and charitable life. His minister, unitarian as he certainly was, was a humble and devoted man---one who was not afraid, nor ashamed to be known as such---one also, who in these days of slander and reviling, to my knowledge, has had no railing accusation brought against him, even by those who are exceeding mad, and breathing out threatnings *against the Unitarians*. Such was the minister,

whom Mr M. and his family saw and heard from sabbath to sabbath. But they saw and heard as though they saw and heard not. Earth seemed yet to smile, and they continued sinful and sinning. Mr M.'s character and fortune grew worse and worse. Mr M. and his family not long after, were seen walking to a different quarter of the town to hear the methodist preacher. If they are faithful to their advantages, they may here become penitent, humble and pious Christians; but they need not have resorted to this place, if holiness of heart and life was their object. But I am fearful lest they deceive themselves. It would be very proper to show their piety, if they shall become pious, in the very place, where they had done so much in years past, to the injury of religion. I am afraid they will try to throw their sins upon the innocent.

If Thomas Scott could have been promoted in the church, and had he been a bishop, or favored with some rich and honorable station, probably he would never have written his *Force of Truth*, (a deceitful title to a deceitful book) nor have become a sour, snarling, and grumbling Calvinist. Disappointed in his prospect of rising in one way, he sought another; and in his writings, continues to inculcate false principles, and give injurious impressions to multitudes. Good night.

LETTER IV.

My dear friend,

The creed and character of a man are not always of the same complexion. The dispositions and habits are formed, often, long before the creed was adopted. Many change their opinions without visibly and much changing their character. Early impressions and associations have generally a lasting influence upon us. The associating principle often proves stronger than the reasoning powers, or even the newly adopted faith. In our calm and deliberate moments, we admit that such opinions are foolish or false, that such notions are visionary and fanciful; still they will exert an influence over us.

The Hopkinsian says, that all sin consists in selfishness; yet how continually is he addressing himself to this selfish principle; talking of the elect and reprobate; of the joys of the one, and of the torments of the other; warning all to flee from the wrath to come. Righteousness and holiness, he says, consist in disinterested benevolence, and yet, how his words and actions seem to contradict his doctrine!

David, to express a keener sense of his own guilt and vileness, and to set his own baseness and perfidy in the most odious and striking light, *confessed* that he was conceived in sin:

others, no doubt, often make the same confession to extenuate their sins, and to excuse and exculpate themselves. David, on another occasion, calls himself a *dead dog* and a *flea* ; but does this prove that he and all mankind are actually such? In this way it would be an easy thing to prove the doctrine of total depravity, and as easy to prove the contrary.

Those who are so ingenious and busy to pave hell with the skulls of infants not a span long, strangely forget, that it is not hell, but heaven, which is, in the holy writings, called a city, having streets ! They who can talk so about infants, plainly show their temper, spirit, and attainments in christian knowledge. They give us no very exalted notion of the goodness of their hearts, or the soundness of their minds. There is no such doctrine expressly and directly taught in scripture ; it is built on implications and inferences ; and what tender mother will thank these subtle theologians for searching out, and setting forth such a horrible doctrine ? The Saviour spoke of the guardian angels, whom children had even here ; but others of a lower dignity and date, have told us of their tormenting devils in the world to come ! Hell is lined and paved with infants, says one, who professes to preach Christ ; but the faithful and true witness says--suffer the little children to come unto me ; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Precious, soothing words !

O my friend, how thankful should we be we have the gospel in our hands ; and that we enjoy such religious privileges and opportunities. How great will be our condemnation if we do not appreciate and improve them !

Many of the self-styled orthodox of the present day have grown more wise, or more humane, or all together ; and think more favorably of the condition of those who die in fancy. If they should talk of paving hell with their little soft skulls, some tender more and affectionate fathers of that sect, would hardly endure to hear the doleful sounds. The Calvinists of the present day speak of the happiness of infants---or at worst, of leaving them in the hands of God ; which is an infinitely more comfortable thought, and expresses more than leaving them in the hands of the devil.

Wishing you a pure conscience, a gospel and a well-grounded christian hope, I am much respect and love, yours.

LETTER V.

My dear friend,

I intend to write shorter letters, more frequently. You know we said *about books*, when together. I was not pointed in your library ; nor was I.

with it. They are such books as easily find their way through the country. Many and unwearied efforts are made to circulate them. Not only religious, but party and pecuniary motives give them currency. If you make proper additions to them, they will do you no hurt, and may be turned to your profit. I trust, by this time, you know Scott so well, that you attach no great importance to his works, relished and devoured as they are by the ignorant, prejudiced, and misguided. Scott's 'Force of Truth,' in my opinion, ought to be rather called the 'Force of Passion,' of ambition, of offended pride, and of party zeal. It abounds with arrogance and presumption. If you read his life, written by his son, and Cowper's and Newton's letters, you will know more about this man. He is thought, by many in this country, a 'great divine;' and he is sometimes quoted, as authority, by those, whose station gives us leave to expect better things of them. Some stare at the large and numerous editions of his works. But there is nothing wonderful in it. There are many ways in which various persons are interested in the sale of them. His Family Bible is a kind of distinguishing badge or sign, a sort of touch-stone. I have occasionally been situated where his 'practical observations' were read *before the morning and evening devotions; and the longer I have read and heard them, the more am I convinced of their false doctrines and b*

influence. His commentary is calculated to make bigots ; to infuse unworthy thoughts both of God and man ; to nourish a sour temper, dark and gloomy mind, a discontented, a narrow, and uncharitable spirit. That you may be wise and devout without the aid of Scott, is the prayer of your friend.

LETTER VI.

My dear friend,

I proceed to make some more remarks on your books. 'Solitude Sweetened'—Meikle believe is the author of it. And he has 'sweetened,' if my memory serves me, many pages of it with the bitter drugs of Calvinism. You may think this a harsh expression ; but to me it seems grievous that one's lonely hours should be filled up with such meditations. Meikle was not the man to write on such a subject. His temperament, his circumstances, his profession and his faith, were all unfavorable to it. I liked Zimmerman better ; though he is bad at the best. By that confusion and obscurity which are common to him, one would think he had written, not in solitude, but in a noisy crowd. His piety sometimes reminds me of that of *Helena Maria Williams*, after she went to France, and joined the revolutionists, and was so charmed

with the devotions of those who sung on the Sabbath, 'It will go on,' or 'it will go round'—one of the popular songs of that time of delusion. I cannot speak in very high and honorable terms of that man's virtue and piety, whose writings bear the marks of a distempered mind, and a depraved religious and moral taste. I am sorry that he should quote so freely and frequently Rousseau, and others, who had genius, but perverted it; who had talents, but prostituted them; who had feelings, but they were wild, wanton, morbid and licentious.

I have heard several writers and preachers quote that passage of Rousseau, where he compares Socrates with Jesus Christ. I know many admire it; I confess, it does not please me. Cicero liked to be praised by the praise-worthy. I wish not to have such a person as John James display his genius in writing eulogies on characters, to which he forms himself so poor a contrast.

Bunyan's Holy War I dislike, and hope there is no need of that book now; nor, of his 'Solomon's Temple Spiritualized.' I would not dismiss the first part of his Pilgrim's Progress; it is ingenious and interesting. The circumstances under which it was written heighten the interest. I love to read it. But if any one were anxious and inquiring what he must do to be saved, I would not direct him *to this book*. It is too allegorical to be com-

prehended generally. It may amuse, nay, it may afford much instruction; but there are many things wrong in it, and the notes in the later editions are quite exceptionable.

Hervey in his *Meditations* has some good things; but his bombastic style is very offensive. And then he teaches some most unscriptural doctrines. His 'Descant on Creation' shows either great indifference to religion, (except as it opened a fertile field for his fancy to rove in) or an ambition to dogmatize, or to be wise above what is written. Indeed he has more evidences of folly and finery, than of faith; more marks of pride and bigotry, than of humble piety. The last time I read his *Meditations* among the Tombs, was when I was just recovering from a dangerous illness. It interested me then; but there are many things censurable in it.

Young's *Night Thoughts*, are dark, extravagant, and gloomy thoughts. Nine nights of such deep musing and grief, is too long; I grow weary with sighing and crying, and look for consolation before he is prepared to grant it. He has many good lines and passages. He has woven into his poem many important truths and precepts; but his antitheses and paradoxes are tiresome; and he throws a veil of sadness and sorrow over what was ushered into the world as tidings of great joy. Cecil, in his *remains*, has hit off Young very justly. His sat-

ires, tragedies, odes, Day of Judgment, book of Job versified; all show the taste and temper of the man,—violent passions—ambition—a soul dark and melancholy. He makes a bitter complaint, in his Night Thoughts, that his wife or daughter, I forget which, who died in France, was not permitted to be buried in a Catholic church yard. Poor man! he then felt what an evil this exclusive spirit is. He thought it hard treatment. But how prevalent is the same spirit even in our own land. To be sure, the bodies of Unitarians can lie in the same ground, where the Calvinist and Trinitarian are mouldering to dust. Our laws secure us this privilege. But how many Unitarians have been cast out while living! No doubt, many have read this pathetic passage in Young, and thought the Papists dreadful creatures, when they are manifesting as uncharitable a temper towards their fellow Christians of other denominations! May your religion make you tender hearted!

Yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

My dear friend,

I shall continue my observations on those books of religion and devotion, which I frequently meet with.

Baxter's Call, and Saint's Rest, you may read with profit ; but he scolds and threatens too much. He seems more fond of driving, than drawing--of seizing, than of winning. You will remember also, that he has doctrines which I do not consider as belonging to the gospel. But we must not always throw aside a book on that account. We should learn to separate the chaff from the wheat, the gold from the dross.

Law's Serious Call is objectionable in doctrines ; still I would advise you to read it. It will direct your attention to a subject of moment, and assist you in forming habits of reflection and meditation. You will derive advantage also from Watts' Improvement of the Mind, and Mason's Self-knowledge ; the devotional works of Flavel, Doddridge, Wilson, Pascal, and Thomas à Kempis. Beveridge's Thoughts on Religion, I trust, will never be your thoughts ; his Resolutions, generally, are worthy of a scholar, a Christian, and bishop.

Harriet Newell's Memoirs. We discussed the merits and influence of this book, while together. When we praise her piety and devotedness to the cause of Christ, we should remember that prudence is a christian virtue, and that many doubt, whether her profession called upon her to make such a sacrifice ; as she did. No doubt she was an interesting and a pious woman ; *but may not one love the Saviour with a true*

and acceptable love, though she never-cross an ocean to manifest it? When Harriet died, and Mr N. wanted another wife, you know what followed. Miss P. T. was Harriet's friend and correspondent, and was probably accounted a pious girl. She left the hills and streams of her native land, and all the pleasant scenes and dear companions of her childhood, and braved the perils of the mighty deep and the greater dangers of a tropical clime; and dangers even greater still. But whose tongue is eloquent in her praise? What missionary orator has stood up to applaud this christian heroine? Why has the trumpet of fame been so silent as to her? What sinful act was laid to her charge? I know not of any.

Fanny Woodbury was a pious girl, and wrote sensible letters, considering her advantages; but some passages in her letters show you what an injury sectarian prejudices do. I pointed out to you what she said about Unitarians; such language does not sound so harshly, in the mouth of a sour, snarling polemic; it is what we are taught, by frequent experience, to expect; but it is not suited to feminine softness and charity, and it is grating music to our ears. We are sorry to remember that queen Mary showed her regard for religion by burning those who could not believe just as she did; and it is painful to discover signs of a narrow, a bitter, and uncharitable spirit in those who have so many reasons, *drawn from nature and from grace*, to be meek

quiet, and humble, and show that they love th
Saviour by the exhibition of his graces!

Sometime ago I observed Fanny's recommen
dation of Scott's family Bible in conjunction wit
those of Doctors of Divinity. I wonder, the
did not get and add Oobookiah's! Miss Wood
bury is not to be blamed; but I marvel at th
fondness or folly of her friends. You will think
I pay but a sorry compliment to your taste i
the choice of books; or you will be mortified
that you should have been so deceived for s
long a time. But you will excuse the freedom
I use, assured of my desire to enlighten an
benefit you. I might go on to make remark
on many other books, which are either in you
library or familiar to you. But they are too nu
merous, and I would hope that as you increas
in christian knowledge and spiritual understand
ing you will have but little need of my helping you

The people of this country know but litt
about the lives of the saints. Even Jerem
Taylor's life of Christ, and Cave's lives of th
Apostles, are works, which you seldom find
Greenwood has published a small volume, con
taining the lives of the twelve apostles; bu
though it has so much to recommend it, yet it i
not perfectly suited to the popular taste. Yo
will buy this book; it will instruct, it will interest
you. The diaries, journals, letters, memoirs
and remains, of saints and apostles, who live
here on earth but a few days ago, demand
large share of the public attention.

Many of these little books, which find their way into every town and family, carry with them the seeds of hurtful errors. They teach unscriptural doctrines; they infuse wrong notions of piety and virtue; they often trouble domestic peace, and pollute the stream of earthly happiness. They hold up to the ignorant, a false standard of christian excellence. Perhaps but few would be so foolish now, and here, as to think the example of Simeon Stylites, the chief 'pillar saint,' worthy of praise and imitation; but they learn to admire and resemble others, who are not much better guides and patterns. May it be your constant study and endeavor to breathe the spirit and follow the example of Christ! Farewell.

LETTER VIII.

My dear friend,

I was glad that Providence led me to your dwelling at that very season, when you peculiarly needed the light and comforts of religion. Had I not been there, your Calvinistic friends would probably have embraced that opportunity to press upon you and your afflicted family the doctrines of that dark and mischievous system. I have been a witness of what a sectarian zeal and *spirit will do* on such occasions.

It was a privilege to me to sit with your family around your sick bed, and converse with you on the doctrines and hopes of the gospel. When your disease abated, and you exhibited signs of returning health, how earnestly I prayed that your impressions and resolutions might be lasting; that if your life was continued, it might be consecrated to the service of God. And with what joy did I witness your increasing strength, and also your increasing interest in religion. O may you never faint nor grow weary in your christian course! Let me exhort you to watchfulness and prayer; and to a daily perusal of the Scriptures. May you ever delight to meditate on their truths, and to obey their precepts. This letter is short; but it will recall tender scenes, and will remind you with what affectionate concern, I am your friend.

LETTER IX.

Dear friend,

You know what sons of thunder many of the Calvinistic preachers are. I use the expression, sons of thunder, as it is frequently applied, now-a-days. It is supposed by some that our Saviour gave to James and John the title, *Boanerges*, at the time they wished to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans. If so, it

was probably a term of reproach; as our Lord told them on this occasion, 'ye know not what spirit ye are of.' Hence no one should glory in being a son of thunder. The two apostles who bore that name, were not always sons of thunder in that sense. About a dozen years after, James was murdered by Herod. John lived to a great age, and had the glorious title, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.' He is reported to have been very mild and gentle in his mode of preaching, certainly in the latter part of his life. Son of thunder as he was once, the language of his old age was, 'little children, love one another!' Let those who are so earnest to have preachers sustain the character of sons of thunder, think of these things; and also remember, that only two of the twelve apostles were called so.

But I began my letter with saying, you know what sons of thunder many of the Calvinistic preachers are. How they talk of the depravity and corruption of the human heart; of its natural enmity to God; how they speak of the divine justice and sovereignty; of the wrath and vengeance of God; of the mercy and merits and of the atoning blood of the Saviour! How they speak of the terrors of the law---its strictness---how they speak of the flames and torments of hell! What loud and frequent appeals they make to the fears of their hearers! But on *whose ears do these dreadful sounds fall the heav-*

iest? Whose hearts are most touched? Whose consciences are most alarmed? Whose souls are filled with terror and anguish? Who are so overcome, that they turn pale and give utterance to their feelings in sighs, tears and groans? And who are most frequently made subjects of hope and grace? I speak it with grief, and to the shame of those, who thus give the salutations of peace—Those who are the most powerfully wrought upon, who are smitten down by apprehensions of their dangers, who are thrown into weepings and agonies—often are they the youngest, the tenderest and most harmless of the flock! Oh!--The feeble, the ignorant, the unfortunate, the infirm and languishing, the desolate, the forlorn and afflicted! Often they are females of trembling nerves, of delicate health, or of visionary and undisciplined minds. These hot thunderbolts, no doubt, oftenest fall on those, who need a refreshing and gentle shower of mercy; who need to have some one address them in the soothing accents of the Light of the world; 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted! Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth! Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!'

Those who most need the stern look and the warning voice, are either absent, or indifferent to them. And those who might be won by gentler means, are subjected to the most coarse and harsh.

You would think by the preaching of some of these orthodox, so called, that judgment was God's common, not his strange work; and that his goodness must not be urged as a motive to repentance. You would think that seasons of affliction were almost the only seasons, when the spirit of God operated, and his saving grace was bestowed—for how many of them experience religion, and meet with a change, as they call it, at such times! The family is reduced, or death enters it, and then they join the church. One's health declines, he is waiting around the grave; and he becomes serious and makes a profession of religion. It is very proper, if one has neglected religion till these times of trial, that he should listen to the admonition, and make what preparation he can for a peaceful death; but let him and others see to it, that they do not draw wrong conclusions from this profession. The mercies of the Lord should turn our hearts to him; and we ought not to delay religion, till misfortunes and afflictions drive us to it.

As birds and beasts gather round the dead, so the religionists often gather round the dying, thinking to change his faith and character, when his moral and mental powers are spent or spoiled. If he can hear and speak, and has not lost all his sensibility, he sighs and groans, confesses and believes just as he is counselled to do. He dies full of hope, joy and peace. *He feels such an assurance, that he longs to be*

gone. He dies in triumph and exultation. They talk of his happy death;—they treasure up his dying speeches and repeat them; and mention him as a trophy of redeeming grace. Now, what impression does this make on others? Does it not often encourage them in sin? Does it not seem to tell them, that they can make a short and easy work of religion? that they can obtain grace, faith, mercy, peace, and hope—holiness and righteousness, in a little time, and by a desperate struggle? If they had been old and hardened sinners, as I am supposing, a modest, humble hope, would become their condition best. May you live the life, and die the death of the righteous! So prays your friend.

LETTER X.

Dear friend,

You wished to have me recommend books, which had been written on the various topics, that had engaged our attention, and you would purchase them. I consented. But calling to mind your circumstances, I cannot advise you to expend so much of your small fortune on a theological library. Your growing family will need all the pecuniary aid you can lend it. *If several of your neighbors would associate with*

you, you might all have access to a large and valuable collection of books at a small price paid by each. I would readily furnish you with a list of the most important and interesting works I am acquainted with. But, till such an object can be accomplished, I will endeavor to furnish you with a substitute. This I shall do by showing you how to read the Scriptures so as to be enlightened and profited by them.

Read the historical books of the Old Testament in course; and read them several times over, till the leading facts, events, characters, and scenes, are familiar to you. Then read them again and again to ascertain what doctrines are taught, and what duties enjoined, before the deluge; then from the deluge to the time of Moses; then from Moses to the time of the prophets, when they were carried away into captivity. Learn their modes and customs—their state of society and civilization—their progress in the arts and sciences—what virtues were most prominent among them, and what vices—their religion and government. Separate the law of Moses into two parts, the ritual or ceremonial, and the moral. Learn what you can of the state of religion, learning, government, &c. among the surrounding nations. Then read the prophets, and connect them with their proper times and events. Mark of what and whom they prophecy, and why? If they are read faithfully, and frequently, the prophets

are not so difficult and unintelligible, as you imagine. Observe what sins are charged upon the people, and what woes are denounced against them; and whether they were threatened with a sudden, or a distant calamity. Then read Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. The Psalms will tell you what passages of their history dwelt much in their minds, and were the occasions of rejoicing and gratitude. You will see their state of moral and pious sentiment. They (the Psalms) are the Jews' manual of devotion. Then you will read the four Gospels and make out of them a history of our Saviour's advent, doctrines, precepts, labors, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension; then the Acts of the Apostles, and lastly the Epistles, and Revelation. Then search them with reference to each particular doctrine and duty. As you read the New Testament, and indeed as you read all the Scriptures, carefully observe what they teach concerning God—his natural and moral attributes—his providence, and his government;—what they teach concerning a Saviour; concerning this world and a world to come. What do they teach us concerning man—his relation to God, and to his fellow men—his connection with time and eternity. When do we find the first intimation of a Messiah? What is revealed about him before the time of Abraham? from Abraham to David? and *then through all the prophets?*

What is said of Christ's offices, character and dignity? What does God say of him, by the mouth of his prophets, and by repeated voices from heaven? What does Jesus Christ say of himself? What do the Evangelists say of him? What do the apostles?

By pursuing this course, you will be surprised to find how much of the Bible may be understood without the help of expositors and commentators. One passage will prove a key to unlock the meaning of another. The light of one sentence will shine upon the darkness of another; and the darkness will vanish away.

If you make the words, style, events, &c. familiar to you, and then compare scripture with scripture, many of its mysteries will be revealed. A common dictionary will teach you the meaning of many of the words with considerable correctness; the marginal readings, in your great Bible, and references, will tell you more; and then you will examine every word as it stands in the text, and context, and in other parts of the scriptures. Not that the references are always right; many of them will guide you into errors; against which you must be guarded; from many of them you will derive advantage. It sometimes happens, that the marginal reading is a better and plainer translation of the original, than the text. You will understand me, if I show what I mean by an example. Turn to **Romans** viii, 6. If you

read that and the next verse, according to the margin, the sense of it will be more readily perceived. 'For the minding of the flesh is death, but the minding of the spirit is life and peace. Because the minding of the flesh is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' The passage thus rendered is more conformable to the Greek, and in this form would not be so likely to be brought in proof of total depravity. The expression, 'The minding of the flesh is enmity against God,' no more proves the doctrine of total depravity, than the expression, 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,' proves that Adam was totally corrupt and depraved, as he came from the forming hand of his Maker.

You know that the Trinitarians have much to say about the two natures or double nature of Christ, and in proof of it ignorant persons sometimes quote Heb. ii, 16. To be sure the word *nature* is in the text, but it is in *italics*, which show that it is not in the original Greek, but was inserted by the translator. Now look in the margin and you find a different sense of the verse; and that strange and mysterious, and unscriptural doctrine of the two natures in Christ disappears even in name.

I may pursue this subject in some future letter. Wishing you a rich supply of all your *temporal* and *spiritual* needs, I subscribe myself your sincere friend.

LETTER XI.

My dear friend,

Did I suppose you would measure my regard for you by the length of my letters, I should endeavor to have them all very and equally long. I am not so anxious to speak much, as to speak well.

How dull, tedious, disgusting and loathsome, it is to sit down and listen to the prattle of those who ought to know how to entertain one better! telling the same silly story over and over again, discovering the most ridiculous pride and vanity, or the grossest stupidity and ill breeding! I have just been in company of this description.

Let me hope, that you will bring up your children in such a manner, that, when they are old, they may give other evidence of age than many do.

Accustom them to read, reason, think, reflect. Teach them to fasten their thoughts on subjects ennobling and elevating, suited to their nature and dignity. Teach them to contemplate the works, to meditate on the providence and word of God. Teach them to feel, to speak and behave, as rational and immortal beings, and Christians. Let not the vanities of earth captivate and degrade their minds, and stupify or corrupt their hearts. Excite in them a relish for those *pleasures, which will not decay, which are pleasures*

in memory and anticipation, as well as in possession. Teach them to admire that beauty, which will never fade; to pursue those objects, which are eternal, and eternally interesting. Teach them to associate all their ideas of happiness, with a pious heart and a virtuous life; with filial obedience to the law of God, and a constant imitation of Jesus Christ. Commending them and you to the care and grace of God, I am affectionately yours.

LETTER XII.

My friend,

You remember what I said about Watts. You were surprised at the many objections, which I brought against the use of his Psalms and Hymns, as a whole, in our devotions. These things had never occurred to you before. It is thus that thousands use language in their devotions, without attending to the meaning, truth and propriety of it. The words excite and impress, without enlightening them. They sing earnestly and ardently, but not understandingly. There are scriptural expressions and allusions; there are the names of God and of Christ, &c. and they inquire no farther. They take it for granted that there can be nothing bad in a Hymn-book, *especially if Dr Watts's name is at the beginning*

of it. No one doubts the piety of Watts. Had he not stood so high as a Christian, many, perhaps, would have given him a higher place, as a poet, than they now do. But he preferred a holy to a profane temple. He kept near the cross of Christ and the altar of God, and the muses would bring him but few garlands there, which seemed splendid and honorable in the eyes of a foolish world. Pope, and Dryden, and many others, in the scroll of human fame stand above him. And why? They had more genius, and wrote better poems! How does this appear? To what do they owe their fame? What gives their numbers their charms and attractions? Alas! they have something to please a prurient ear—to awaken unholy passions—to kindle impure desires—to give wings to a roving fancy—and new powers to a polluted imagination. Many of their peculiar beauties are visible only through the dark and foul medium of earth! They cannot bear the light of heaven shining upon them; they grow ugly and loathsome. Yes, unless we abuse the name of poetry, genius, and wisdom, and quite mistake their true characteristics, we shall not give Watts a slighted nor an ignoble place. He is not wholly wanting in pieces of classic taste and elegance. There are many passages in his works, of which I would say, if any one is disgusted here, I envy not, nor desire his moral and mental taste! *For here are the breathings of a pious soul; the*

musings of a devout and grateful heart; the thoughts are lifted from earth to heaven; the affections are gently loosed from temporal, and fastened upon eternal things. He who can find nothing excellent, inspiring, sublime in Watts, may easily obtain elsewhere the wretched dole, which he craves. Yes; there are many poets, whose strains will be sweet and ravishing to him, harsh, discordant and offensive as they are to the ear that is attuned to praise and prayer. You will now, I hope, candidly listen to other remarks I have yet to make.

He has beauties, and excellences; I deny it not, but own it. But there are many faults and blemishes in Watts; and some of the most poetical pieces are not the least objectionable. In him you are not only made to sing the Lord's song, and the songs of Zion, and of Moses, and of the Lamb; but all the mysteries and dogmas of the trinity, and all the dark and peculiar opinions of Calvin. Even Trinitarians and Calvinists have ventured to give an abridgment of Watts, and have left out many of the most objectionable verses and psalms or hymns. Worcester, I see, in his Abridgment, has omitted the 13th hymn of the 1st Book, which contains this verse, which I will transcribe, that you may not forget it.

‘ This infant is the mighty God,
Come to be suckled and adored;
The eternal Father, Prince of peace,
The Son of David and his Lord.’

This, you perceive, contains doctrines of reason and inference; they are not plainly taught in Scripture. The language is poetry, not Scripture. You know the particular passage of Isaiah, he alludes to in this hymn. But any one might see that Watts had refined upon the prophet, and any one acquainted with Hebrew (as a theologian should be, or be modest in his doctrines) might see that our translators had refined very much upon the original. The original gives no countenance to such doctrines. But we must drop this subject now.

In variety of subjects, Watts is deficient and redundant. He has many dull, prosaic lines; many poor stanzas; some low thoughts and comparisons; some improper allusions, and some vulgar expressions. There is but a small proportion of his hymns, which I read; and there are generally exceptionable stanzas in them, which I am obliged to omit. There was but little sacred poetry, when Watts wrote. Sternhold and Hopkins was used in many churches, and in many something still worse, before Dr Watts; and if you were acquainted with the poetry of that period, you would own that Dr Watts had done much to be remembered and praised by posterity. He was young, when he wrote many of his hymns, and he versified the doctrines and opinions of the day. In the latter years of his life, he became more of a theologian, and had very different views of these doc-

trines, which he embraced so ardently, and interwove with much of his earliest poetry. Adieu.

LETTER XIII.

My friend,

As you become acquainted with history and with mankind, you will find that they who are the most dogmatical, dictatorial, and positive in their creed, are not the most gracious and lamb-like in their dispositions. You will oft observe that those who contend most fiercely for the faith, are not the most careful about the peculiar virtues of the gospel. They say more for the hidden glory than for the open example of Christ. They contend about the personality of the spirit, and the necessity of its quickening and regenerating influence ; but the fruits of the spirit are too often overlooked. It is a most gross delusion, if we mistake the spirit of Calvinism for the spirit of Christ.

Such a person is awakened, convicted, converted. How does it appear? She goes to whispering, anxious, and inquiry meetings; to conferences and concerts. She goes to a different church--takes the Recorder and Herald---joins a temperance society. She avoids *her former companions*; calls her neighbors in-

fidels and deists. If she has parents, she gives them no peace till they follow her; if she has a husband, the miserable thing must give up his conscience, his reason and faith to his wife, who from the day of her conversion takes upon her the offices of priest, lord bishop, and even pope, in regard to her husband, and makes him orthodox in spite of himself. But she appears no more happy in herself, nor does she make others so. She sighs, but is not soft and tender. She often weeps, but dark or angry passions are frequently the occasion of her tears. She is prattling and censorious; or sullen and silent. She acknowledges herself a great and constant sinner, and yet accounts herself holy; but others, of a different creed or church, are enemies to God, and heretics too. She is changed; but her change is a mournful one to many of her former friends and associates. She is a new creature in some respects; but it is very doubtful, whether she has become a better creature. She has become a zealot, a bigot, a partizan, a religionist, now. She has lost some of her former excellences, and embraced the errors of Calvinism. If she has the essential doctrines, it is plain enough, that she has not the essential virtues and graces, of the gospel. She is either unconscious, or unmindful of them. It is a sad perversion of the gospel, and an abuse of language to call some of these Calvinists *regenerate*, or *born again*, in the scriptural

sense of that expression. They may talk about the image, the excellences, and glory of Christ; we want to see the temper, the mind, the spirit, the moral resemblance in them. They may talk of being brought out of darkness into light; I want to see the evidence of it in their good works shining before men; and in their love and meekness to their brethren—not in the narrow and selfish love of party, such as even sinners have, but diffusive, resembling that of their Master. They are anxious for the doctrines of the cross; I wish them a clearer view of him who died upon it, and of those amiable qualities, which were conspicuous in him. They talk of his splendid glories; I wish they would be more assiduous in the practice of his virtues. They tell of coming out from the world; I wish they would abandon the vices and spirit of it. They tell of giving up themselves to God; I wish they would make a surrender and sacrifice of the prejudices and baser passions. They tell of their love to Christ; I wish it produced more lovely effects on their conduct and character. They tell of their concern for others, who are in error and sin; I wish they would manifest very differently from what they often do. I wish these things for their sake, for the sake of others, and for the sake of the honor and advancement of true religion. For how many there are, who mistake these things for real piety! Those often, among a certain class

acquire the name of very pious, or lively Christians, who are the most violent in temper and prejudice—the most extravagant, and visionary, and not the most useful members of society. They are haughty and arrogant, meddlesome and gossiping; lusting for power and dominion; claiming the liberty to write the creed, and prescribe the faith, and rule the consciences of others. Not seldom, their most conspicuous marks of grace, are rank, insufferable spiritual pride; a bold face and an unbrindled tongue. They talk of the humbling doctrines of the cross; but where is their humility? May God preserve you and your dear lady from the bad opinions and bad influences of these times of contention! Remember that you can be a Christian and be happy, only in proportion to your moral resemblance to Christ. Therefore, never forget his precepts, his example and his spirit; and may you walk in the truth and with God humbly and perseveringly; and so bear your cross here, that you shall receive a crown hereafter!

LETTER XIV.

My dear friend,

You say you were deeply affected by my last letter particularly; and you mention Hopkinsians and Calvinists, who do not answer my descrip-

tion. I knew you could; and so could I. I am acquainted with many, whose piety I commend, and whom I esteem for their virtues. They have signed a Calvinistic creed. or bowed assent to it; they attend a Calvinistic church, but they have not the proud, and restless, and domineering spirit of Calvin. They express no fond regard for his five points; you scarcely hear them named, or alluded to. They show no desire to be known by sectarian titles. They do not estimate a person by his reception of a dogma, but by his exhibition of the christian graces and virtues. You will understand me ; in my censures, I include only those, who bear the character I have portrayed. No humble and pious follower of Jesus ought to take offence at what I have said, since I did not mean him or her. I am not one of those who acknowledge no goodness, where there is a difference in religious opinion. I have found many good people who were not professedly Unitarians; may God bless them and greatly increase their number! I wish to live in peace and charity, and fellowship with all good people of every rank, name, and denomination. As I write these things, I recollect with pleasure and gratitude, those kind, hospitable, and charitable souls of other creeds and churches, with whom it has been my privilege often to associate. I love to think of them; and if any of them should ever read this letter, *let me embrace the opportunity to repeat to*

my cordial salutations. Some of them one—gone to inherit the promises—gone to the better world, where all is harmony and love! those who remain, be faithful unto death, and receive a crown of life! The number no doubt very small, in our towns and churches generally of those who are puffed up and doting on these doctrines which occasion so much contention and division. But this small number keeps most agitated and perplexed. Their tempers are injured; their fears and suspicions are raised; they are filled with prejudice and superstition; they are led down by a popular delusion, and to a total domination.

I could name many societies, where, if a dozen or half dozen, and sometimes even fewer, individuals could be changed or removed, the error and the five points would do little harm; but the influence of these few is often owing to their wealth, or to some casual distinction. One has lately moved into the town; he was a Unitarian and was not contented till others were so. Another had formed an acquaintance with a clergyman of that sect, and hence a door was open to the admission of error. Another sent a child to a Calvinistic school or college, without suspecting the consequences. He was ignorant or imprudent, or very wrongly advised. These itinerant sectarists passing through their towns had recompensed their politeness and hospitality by sowing among them the seeds

of disorder and trouble. Another was offended at his minister, and changed his opinions to indulge his passions.

So far as my knowledge has extended, a large proportion of the Calvinists, or orthodox, as they call themselves, are those, who have paid but very little attention to the subjects in debate. They have very indistinct ideas of the peculiar notions of their own party, and very distorted and false notions of ours. Their reading and studious hours are few, and limited to books which establish them in their present opinions, and increase their prejudices against others. Not a little proportion of them are poor, ignorant, and feeble women, who have been awakened, convicted, impressed and converted, in times of high excitement, or in seasons of sickness and sorrow ; when undue advantage was taken of their weak or desolate condition. I say not these things to wound their feelings or to reproach their circumstances. God forbid ! But their poverty, and weakness, and affliction, do not justify a proud and censorious spirit ; and I lament, that such deference should be paid to the vague opinions of these persons, while the instructions of those eminent for their piety and learning, for their long and laborious researches into the scriptures, and for their exemplary and useful life, are lightly esteemed.

A firm faith in their doctrines, they say, is essential to salvation. But examine many, and they can give you no account of these doctrines. They cannot even state them, much less the reasons for them. They say, the Unitarian does not preach the gospel; does not preach Christ. But examine them, and they know nothing about the subject. They never read a Unitarian paper, or book, nor attended their place of worship. I have conversed with Trinitarians and Calvinists; and when I stated the doctrines of Calvin, they disowned them. Indeed I rarely meet with a person, who will confess to me that he really believes these mysterious and mischievous opinions. And yet they are called orthodox, though they reject the very doctrines, for rejecting which we are called deists and infidels! Alas! I have been more than once inclined to think, that it is the carnal and domineering spirit of Calvin, which not a few prize and seek, more than they do his doctrines. You may think me severe; but with my observations, and experience, you would call me none too much so. These twenty years past have afforded me many opportunities for knowing something about mankind, and their various feelings and views in regard to religion. I have found many whom I deemed erroneous in doctrine; but this has not grieved me so much, as those things which related *more immediately to the heart and life.* Wit-

nessing so many things which ought not so to be, how often have I repeated that passage of Cowper, beginning—

‘ O for a lodge in some vast wilderness !’

‘ Lands, intersected by a narrow frith, abhor each other.’ How might this be applied to the selfish and exclusive spirit of the present day! ‘ Mountains interposed, make enemies of nations.’ Mountains! But something, much less than a mountain, occasions a greater enmity, between people who ought to be bound together by social, friendly, and kindred ties. You can pursue these reflections at your leisure. May heaven be your aim and guide, and your final abode!

LETTER XV.

My dear friend,

You see how faithful I have been hitherto in writing religious letters; I am glad to be told, that they are not dull and tedious to you. There are many persons, who think they have juster claims to learning, taste and refinement, who are neither ashamed nor afraid to have it known, that they are ignorant on moral and religious subjects, and have no curiosity, nor desire to become *wise* in these all-important things---which our

ur would call the one thing needful. I met with many, who wished they understood Greek, Latin, and French; who regretted they had not attended to grammar, geography, astronomy, and other branches of study, from childhood and youth ; but for their ignorance of the holy Bible, and all that belongs to a christian and happy life, though here we more grossly and culpably ignorant, express no such signs of deep regret. The truths of religion always seem to you indeed they are, the proper food for the mind, the needed medicine and nourishment of the immortal soul.

worthy of remark, that some of the most serious and difficult, and some of the most strange and repelling doctrines are those chiefly not solely, drawn from detached and incoherent passages, from remote inferences, from long and abstract reasonings, and ingenious and laborious disquisitions. Take, for instance, the received doctrine of the trinity. No passage of Scripture teaches it so plainly, as the apostle's Catechism, and the Nicene and Constantinian creeds. No: it is reasoned out; and we, too, who speak most violently against it, when it confronts and opposes their system. If Christ had said, ' verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the high and lofty One, who inhabit eternity ; I am the supreme Jehovah, Creator of the heavens and the earth, and

the sea, and of all things that are in them ; am the everliving and everlasting Father ; have two natures, the one human and the other divine ; I am the second person in the holy blessed and glorious trinity ; I am co-eternal co-essential, and co-equal with the Father ;—had he uttered the plain and precise language of the Trinitarian, how differently would it have impressed and persuaded us.

But this doctrine rests on no such solid foundation. It is built on wrongly interpreted and obscure passages, and supported by inference and implication.

Again, take the doctrine formerly received by many, which doomed so many infants to the wrath and curse of God, and to the pain of hell forever ! It is not taught plainly and directly in the Bible, as it has been taught elsewhere. Christ does not speak of the elect and non-elect infants. He says, ‘ of such is the kingdom of heaven ; ’ but he nowhere in the gospel says, of such is the region of woe, and the gulf of despair ; and that many of these little ones shall dwell in everlasting burning. No. The doctrine, which has filled the soul of many a bereaved mother with ineffable sorrow and anguish, is a doctrine of inference—doctrines come at by curious research, by nice speculation, by a process of cold and formal reasoning. Such men as Edwards and Hopkins, so skilled in all the arts of logic, so gifted

and learned, could soon reason a little infant into hell. Horrible logic! Sad use of Heaven's gift!

Fear not, mourning parents, for your departed babe; if the words of frail and sinful men encourage despair, go to him who has the words of eternal life; and he will give you hope, and peace, and rest.

' See ! Israel's gentle Shepherd stands,
With all engaging charms !
Hark ! how he calls the tender lambs,
And folds them in his arms !'

Who can listen to these words, especially when they are repeated or sung by little children, and not feel their softening power on his heart? They recall to mind passages in the gospel, full of tenderness and comfort. We easily remember the scene, where it was said by the good Shepherd, 'Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me.'

I have observed, that those who had the strongest faith in, and the most to say about the damnation of infants, were persons of stern temperament, who never had any children, or whose children, through bad example and bad education, and through the pernicious influence of those, with whom they associated, had become headstrong, unmanageable, vicious and dissolute.

Again, take the doctrines of the divine sovereignty. decrees. election and reprobation.

They are doctrines of inference ; they
 soned out. I know that you can find t
 election, and a number of passages, whic
 taken separately, seem at first to tea
 doctrines ; but they are capable of a bet
 pretation, when compared with the s
 generally. Men have exercised thei
 and their reason in so explaining the ger
 guage of the Bible, that the easy and
 may bend to what is dark, and favor, or
 not disturb their opinions and theories
 O how unprofitable is that reasoning
 seems to attack the moral character of C
 to undermine the foundations, and des
 encouragements of virtue and piety.
 son of this description will make even th
 tudes of the Saviour a response and an
 the sentiments and opinions, which ha
 med the title of orthodoxy. Such peop
 find a rebuke and an admonition in Swi
 of a Tub. I would direct them to that
 they may come back to the scriptures w
 docility and candor. It is very evid
 the plain and frequently repeated truths
 ture are against these obnoxious doctri
 busy and restless men make the plain
 the obscure. That you may have a
 ingenuous mind and a gospel faith, is the
 prayer of your friend.

LETTER XVI.

My dear friend,

I often meditate on the changes in opinion and practice, which time and circumstances produce in different denominations.

Many of those things, for which our forefathers hated the church of England, we like and adopt. The farther they were from Episcopacy, the farther they were as they thought from the mother of harlots, and the nearer they were to heaven! But they found honey in this wilderness, which many tasted of and had their eyes opened; and they discovered, by degrees, that their forefathers were not totally wrong in every thing they did, and that they might, without ruining their own souls, imitate their ancestors in many things.

When the Baptists first appeared, how much was said about the subjects and mode of baptism, as though salvation rested on a perfect and practical knowledge of those two points. One zealous preacher of the sect then probably made more noise and clamor about these matters, than a hundred would now! How they talked about hirelings, and priestcraft, and formality! How they affected to despise human learning! How they were disgusted or shocked at a written discourse, and elder and deacon were high titles in the country. But now you cannot al-

ways distinguish a baptist church from any. The church is an elegant one---has a beautiful organ! perhaps---and many comforts, and conveniences---such as chandeliers, blinds, carpets, curtains, cushions, crickets, &c. &c. The minister has A. M. and D. D. to his name, is not afraid to be called Reverend. He writes his sermon with great care, and reads it to the congregation; and not a few admire it, and think it good and profitable to edify their souls, instead of the noisy and incoherent jargon, which they sometimes used to hear. Their minister wears clerical dress, is ordained, settled, and receives a comfortable salary. They now talk of the importance of a learned clergy, and contribute their wealth to build and endow schools, colleges, and theological seminaries.

The Methodists have changed much in this part of the country. Some of those things which they once prized, are now trifles, of which they are ashamed; and those, they once despised, are gladly possessed, and eagerly sought for.

Man is the creature of imitation; and the social principle will at times gain the ascendancy over the selfish. We grow wearied with distinctions which our increasing knowledge tells us are childish, which others observe with satisfaction, and often with contempt.

Those who have declaimed most loudly *against* all outward and formal religion

been equally chargeable with it. Many of those who have spoken so sneeringly of 'book religion,' and of reading prayers—O the nonsense---the confusion---the jargon, which they have uttered as a substitute! And those dissenters, who are accounted the most gifted in extemporaneous exercises, have, in fact, but few or none, strictly such. They are the fruits of long labor, frequent meditation, and repetition. I have sometimes doubted, whether there was in reality, from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from year to year, a greater variety in the sacred offices of the dissenter, than in those of the churchman. I might go on with observations on these changes, but you can pursue the subject by yourself, if you need the moral which it is fitted to teach.

Since I have mentioned forms of prayer, let me advise you to use them in your family. I trust you pray daily; but whether you pray with your family, I know not; as I performed that service while with you. If you have neglected that duty, and want confidence in your own abilities, let me intreat you to get one of those prayer books, which have been compiled by Unitarians, and make your house still more a Bethel;---and may God bless it!

LETTER XVII.

My dear friend,

I have thought that some of those orthodox were more engaged in destroying another and the Unitarians, than in destroying vice and iniquity. For Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Church and Catholics, are all orthodox in their eyes; but they have their lines of distinction in their separate kingdoms. They can co-exist with one another fiercely enough, when they can find no other enemy; and they can co-ordinate their forces to restrain and crush the Unitarians. Not a few afford too strong evidence, that they are embarked in a worldly enterprise; that their zeal and ambition are the bad prompters of their work. They aim their shafts at superstitious errors; and sin holds up her head, and feeds the danger.

If there was more silence, or candor, on disputable points, and men would unite in the propagation of those truths, which they generally receive, how much might be done in the cause of truth, virtue and humanity! They might cooperate in circulating the Scriptures. They might dwell often and earnestly on such themes as these;—the being, the unity, the attributes, the providence, the grace and mercy of God; the moral and official character of (

the Son of God ; and the excellency and importance of religion. They might exhort men to be virtuous and pious ; and as motives to these things, they might present the goodness and mercy of God ; the compassion, sufferings and death, with the precepts and example of the Saviour. They might also urge the testimony and example of all good and worthy men of antiquity. They might appeal to their justice, generosity, love, gratitude, to their hopes and fears. But in alarming the fears, let them be cautious, and prudent! Let them not go beyond the word of God, nor betray a fondness for using the rod. There are two letters of Cowper, published in the Panoplist for, I think, 1809, on the manner of preaching, in which he speaks of these sons of thunder---and of those who scold and threaten. These two letters are worthy of being written in characters of gold ; and of being read by preachers of every denomination. They are more worthy to be read and had in remembrance, as Cowper was remarkable for his orthodoxy. But to drop this---They might present to view the example of Christ, and tell their hearers how reasonable and proper it was, that they should imitate it. They might set forth his virtues, graces, and spirit, and tell them that the same mind should be in them.

I must think that such a course would impress upon mankind a deeper sense of the ex-

cellence, reasonableness and importance of
gion ; and I have no doubt, it would greatly
to the dignity of the clerical profession.
those who preach, preach those truths w
can be understood and felt, and be made p
tical principles. Let them remember that
audience is composed of the poor, the igno
the infirm, the unfortunate, the afflicted,
young, the aged, the tempted, the anxious
doubtful, the careless, the stupid, and the
dened sinner. They have come to the h
of God to be fed with the sincere milk of
word ; not to be entertained with the froth
quence, the dreams, the visionary theories
metaphysical speculations, the extravagant
ries, the ill-timed wit, the theatrical tones
gestures, which too often find their way into
desk. Let them remember, that the good s
herd will care for and feed the sheep, and
lambs, and lead those who have gone astray,
to the fold of Christ.

Let them subdue their pride and their t
for literary fame, by thinking of how little v
is the applause of man, when it is acquire
deficiencies in duty, by indifference to pr
sions, and forgetfulness of God! Let t
ever bear in mind, that if they lead one si
to repentance, they cause joy in heaven ;
he who teaches men by precept and practic
observe the commandments of Christ, sha
called great in the kingdom of heaven ;

those who have turned many to righteousness, shall shine like stars forever in the kingdom of their Father; that he who converts a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins!

Let there be written in letters of gold on the walls of our churches--**HOLY AND REVEREND IS HIS NAME. HOLINESS BECOMETH THY HOUSE, O LORD, FOREVER. SECRET THINGS BELONG UNTO GOD. THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE IN EVERY PLACE. THE LORD LOOKETH ON THE HEART. THE RIGHTEOUS LORD LOVETH RIGHTEOUSNESS. HE THAT DOETH RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RIGHTEOUS. THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD. THE SECOND COMMANDMENT IS LIKE UNTO THE FIRST. YE ARE MY FRIENDS, IF YE DO THE THINGS WHICH I SAY. BY THIS SHALL ALL MEN KNOW THAT YE ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER. LOVE WORKETH NO HILL TO HIS NEIGHBOR. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, &c. IF I HAVE NOT CHARITY, I AM NOTHING. IF A MAN HAVE NOT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, HE IS NONE OF HIS.** These important words, and many more like them, which may be easily found in the Bible, by one not a stranger to its contents, might benefit both the teacher and the taught, and be continually speaking words of correction, caution, and comfort. And if such ornaments seemed too expensive or too popish, then let *these same divine sentences* be engraven on

the fleshly tables of the heart, so that they be always present to the mind's eye.

LETTER XVIII.

Dear friend,

Perhaps my last letter reminded you of that passage of Cowper, where he speaks of such a strain of reproof in the ears of the wise. No wonder that such things excite the scorn and contempt of men of good sense, of good taste, and alive to the moral and spiritual wants of their brethren.

But the thoughtless and giddy multitude hear differently ; or they do not think at all. They like to hear something new and noisy—novel doctrines wrapped up in language still dark and mysterious. The plain and important truths of the gospel, urged in an easy but mild and affectionate manner, are dead and cold to them. And why have they this taste? Much of it is probably owing to ignorance and error in regard to religion. They think that the plain and obvious truths of the Bible, if firmly believed, are unworthy of being called faith ; they must have the notions of Calvin, Hopkins and others, for *lay hold on*. Such notions of piety have

formed that the simple teachings of the gospel will not satisfy them. They starve under such preaching. They want a religion, which costs but little mental and bodily effort, unless that effort is caused by passion and imagination. They want a religion, which will consist chiefly in believing mysteries, in saying so many prayers, and attending so many meetings, and joining so many societies, and sending so much money to the heathen beyond sea, and so much to the Indians of our own country, and abstaining from such kinds of food and drink, recreations and ornaments.

They are willing to do almost anything, but to take the cross, and live a sober, righteous, godly, humble and charitable life.

I mentioned Cowper, whose poems are familiar to you; give me leave to recommend to you the perusal of his life by Hayley, and his private correspondence. They will add force and light to many beautiful passages in his poems. Many of his hymns are dark and gloomy, though a few are excellent. As you read them and some of his letters, which speak of his spiritual condition, and his awful prospects, you will be admonished of the importance of praying and striving for a sound and well balanced mind, and just views of religion.

You may be profited by reading poetry, now and then, and I will mention a few authors, which you may read as they come within your

reach, and as you have opportunity. T chiefly of a religious and moral charac calculated to improve your mind and hea ton, Montgomery, Thomson, Beattie, Sarr gers, Cumberland, I mean his Messiah and spection, Campbell, Cotton's Fire Side, Hemans. There are many exceptiona sages in some of these ; but I trust you ready guarded against their influence. our modern poets are unfit to be named they will never find their way into you ing.

LETTER XIX.

To Mr ———.

Dear sir,

As we came away from the lecture was on regeneration, or a change of he remember how we conversed on the su which our attention had been directed. served how much there was said on t ject now, and what a thick darkness rest it notwithstanding. Many persons war out the art of being happy without bein

What are we when born? and wha become in being born again in the gosp of the expression? are two important q to solve which, perplexes and distresse

They have caused you much anxiety. I shall try to relieve it by giving what I conceive to be scriptural answers to them.

We are born weak and imperfect beings. By imperfect I mean limited, finite, not that we are naturally deficient in any of those parts or powers, which belong to such a creature as man. We are born free from sin, and what is called total depravity ; but neither pious nor virtuous. We speak of an innocent, harmless babe, but not of a vicious, or virtuous, or pious one. We have appetites and passions to be regulated and governed, desires to be chastened, powers to be awakened and excited, faculties to be improved, capacities to be unfolded. We have a social, moral and intellectual nature. We are susceptible of cultivation, and improvement; we are capable of a right, and liable to a wrong direction. There are motives presented to keep us in the path of innocence and virtue, and temptations to turn us aside from it. When memory, reason, and conscience, begin their work, we are moral and accountable beings. As soon as we have a knowledge of our duty to God, to our fellow men, and to ourselves, we are capable of moral and religious actions. Our first birth introduces us into the natural; our second, into the spiritual world. Our second or new birth brings us acquainted with divine truth, and sheds upon us its light and influence. If you believe and obey the gospel, and

make it your care and delight to resemble Christ, then you are born again ; though you can no more tell the time and all the circumstances of this heavenly, any more than you can tell those of your natural birth. You are saved by faith, and with God. You follow the footsteps of the Saviour. You do all things in obedience to the will, and to the glory of God. You live a life of faith, hope and charity. You say you have not always thus felt, believed, and acted. Dismiss your doubts, and be thankful, that you have been thus gently and silently led into the way of holiness. But at the same time be humble, watchful, earnest and diligent to be continually making progress in every commandment of grace and virtue.

LETTER XX.

Dear sir,

Is it not remarkable, that one of the commonly quoted passages in proof of depravity, is not found in the Bible, till we come to the second king of Israel, the psalmist? And he does not say anything to the point, till he had committed two most heinous and wicked crimes ; nor, even then, till he was brought to his ear a message from the Lord, which touched his conscience and

nished him with most sorrowful occasion for composing the 51st Psalm. By the rule, which many profess to observe in interpreting some parts of scripture, if David had not prefixed the words, 'I said in my haste' to the other clause, 'all men are liars;' they would have taken this passage to prove that every son and daughter of Adam is a liar. He says, that he was shapen in iniquity, and they say, that all are. But they do not make a universal application of their rule. It would sound very differently to me, if that verse was removed, and instead of it these words were inserted, viz. 'Behold I inherited a corrupt nature from Adam, and was born totally depraved, a hater of all good and a lover of all evil; and all mankind come into the world thus morally impure and impotent.'

But admitting the doctrine of total depravity to be true, this was not a suitable time for David to teach or refer to it, unless he wished to ease his conscience by throwing the guilt of his deeds upon others: and this would have been as much as to tell God that he ought not to have blamed him, and that he had done wrong in sending the prophet to accuse and trouble him! But David in this instance manifests different thoughts and feelings. He says, 'I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me.' The expressions, 'my transgression, and my sin;' 'against thee have I sinned;' 'deliver me from

blood guiltiness,' show, that he felt an conscience, and that he was thinking more about his own actual and most aggravated sins, than he was about his birth, or sin. That 7th verse is undoubtedly a language of emotion, or strong passion; and not to be understood literally. When he calls himself a worm, a flea, a dead creature, you are not so foolish as to suppose, that other human beings were, or that even he was, literally and really such. There would be so much difficulty in understanding this, were it not that so many have a favorite doctrine or system, which they, beforehand, wish to be supported by divine authority.

I said, they do not: I add, they cannot make a universal application of their rule. Their use of some expressions in their prayers, saying, they were used by holy men of old, as, 'coming over the mountains of our transgressions;' 'all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;' 'rolling sin as a sweet morsel under the tongue;' 'who chargest thine angels with folly;' 'loose sin with a cart rope.' But they do not do as Job in cursing their birth, though they have the same views of inbred and birth sin; nor as Job, No, they abstain from this language.

Nor do they imitate Ezra, and Nehemiah, and others, in asserting their innocence; and they have conscientiously done their duty, *saying so.*

Since I have mentioned Job, I would tell you, that the word Redeemer, in this book, does not refer to Christ. Neither does that word, when it occurs in the 19th Psalm, 'O Lord, my strength and my redeemer,' mean Christ. God is frequently called a redeemer and saviour, as well as Christ. Many ignorant and stupid people do not consider this; and some zealots for opinions have said, because it is asserted in one of the prophets, Hosea xiii, 4, 'for there is no Saviour beside me,' therefore, Christ must be God. So they reason, and wrest scripture. That you may be a babe in humility and malice, and in understanding and character a man in Christ Jesus, is the prayer of your friend.

LETTER XXI.

To X. Y.

My dear friend,

I asked you, the other day, why you did not join the church? you answered, you were not fit. You acknowledged the duty, but said you were not prepared, not in a right frame. You are forty years old; and no doubt, this question has been often put you, and you have returned a similar answer. You were not fit then; you are not now. But what constitutes that fitness? *How is it to be acquired?* Do you know what

it is, and have you sought it as something of great consequence to you?

When will you be fit? You own you ought to make a profession of religion. You own the duty, but will not perform it, because you are unfit. But who gave you leave to neglect a known duty on account of your feelings? Why do not you make the same excuse, and so neglect to read the scriptures, to keep the sabbath, and to go to meeting? If you observe these things with proper feelings; if you are fit to read, to pray, to worship, then why are you not fit to make resolutions, and professions, to join the church, and partake of the Lord's Supper? You know how you are to fit yourself for these duties, namely, by faith, repentance, prayer, obedience, and charity. Now, why have you not done these things? Why do you wait? Behold, I stand at the door, and knock! God will give his holy spirit to them that ask him. If you are endeavoring to live a pious life, as I hope you are; then why do you delay this duty? Many a sabbath, have you seen the sacramental supper prepared; many a time, have you heard that parting, dying request of the Saviour, read and enforced, 'this do in remembrance of me,' and you have not obeyed; but remained, a spectator, or gone away! I beseech you to read the account of our Saviour's institution of the Supper, and the account of his passion and death, again, when you are alone and thoughtful; and ponder these

things in your heart. I suppose that your feeling of unfitness is very much produced by the recollection, that it is a known, an important, and long neglected duty. The thought of your past inattention to it fills you with shame, regret and sorrow. It is a new duty to you; not of new obligation, however. You are unaccustomed to it. It will excite the observation of others, if you change your course so much; and Christians of other denominations have given you wrong impressions in regard to the preparation needed for the duty.

But how are you to remove or surmount these difficulties by delay? This is a question worth your most solemn attention. Ten years hence, should the brittle thread of life hold together so long, in all probability, these hindrances will be as formidable and discouraging, as they are now. Nay, we have reason to think, they will be more so, and that obstructions will increase and excuses be multiplied.

Have you ever thought of dying? and, that you know not the time of this solemn event? And have you ever resolved that you would perform this duty before death? Then, my friend, why do you depend upon the future, which is so uncertain? Do you think, you shall not be called out of the world, before you have performed every neglected duty? Alas, are not many *taken away, before they put their good resolutions of a distant change into practice?* I would urge

you to attend to these things now. If you bring a prayerful heart and a willing mind to the duty, God will accept and bless it, and will gradually inspire you with the feelings which you now want, but are not striving aright to possess. How solemnly we are bidden to confess Christ openly, and before men! and how plainly we are told to commemorate his dying love in the Sacrament! O think of these things, and never make that excuse again. Many are so situated that they are kept back from the communion by human creeds and requirements which they cannot find authorized by scripture. You can bring no such excuse. The church and pastor of your society would welcome you to the table of the Lord, if you came with good intentions, desires, and resolves. You know it. May you be thankful for, and use your privileges.

If your mind is perplexed with doubts relative to this subject, you may receive light and direction from a number of published discourses, which may be easily obtained. I will mention a few works on the topic.—There is a chapter on the subject in the new *Whole Duty of Man*. There is also a discourse by Dr Andrew Kippis on the Lord's Supper, one by Mr Greenwood, and another by Mr Barrett.

That you may know all your duties and *perform them*, is the prayer of your friend.

LETTER XXII.

Dear friend,

Ought we to love Christ more than we love God? This question will shock you, perhaps. And yet, in hearing many people converse, and many preach, and in reading books of devotion, especially hymns, and sacred songs, composed by persons of warm feelings and a lively fancy, have you not had the conviction forced upon your mind, that the Saviour was thought of, and honored, and praised, and loved, more than the Father? If the name of God occurs but seldom in our prayers and sermons, it is not observed; the omission is not complained of as offensive or faulty. But if the name of Christ is seldom heard in these exercises, though they may all breathe his spirit and doctrines, it is noticed with disapprobation and censure. Our faith and piety are suspected. They have such views of the holiness, justice and sovereignty of God, and they dwell so much on his strict law, and on his wrath, that they mostly think and speak of God with awe and terror; while the love, mercy, and compassion of Christ are exhibited in so moving a manner, that they are drawn to him with familiarity and confidence. The *different views*, which they have of God and of Christ, are calculated to excite their gratitude to the Son, and to withhold it from the

Father, the bestower of all grace and mercy.

Trinitarians are much offended, because we do not worship Christ as God, though there is no authority for it in scripture; but they scarcely say a word about our not worshipping the holy spirit, though there is still greater room for their complaint here, than in the former case. Still there is no gospel ground for complaint in either instance.

They say much about loving and exalting Christ; but little, or nothing, about loving or exalting the Spirit! Dr Watts, I believe, has but very few hymns addressed specially to the Spirit, but many to Christ. In some old books of prayer and meditation, many of the devotions are offered to Jesus, but very few to the Spirit. So it is in regard to hymns by trinitarians generally. There seems to be no propriety nor consistency in this, if there are three persons in the godhead in every sense equal. But this strange doctrine is taught much more plainly in creeds and catechisms of a later origin than the gospel, than it is taught in the word of God!

In the Apocalypse or Revelation, it is thought, by many, that we have an account of the heavenly worship. They ascribe blessing and honor, glory and power, to Him, that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb; but nothing is said of the Spirit. How many times we are commanded in scripture, to love, fear, worship, and serve, God; to believe, love, follow,

and imitate his Son Jesus Christ ! But almost nothing is said of the Spirit, in these respects. It is said to be sent, given, shed, poured out; we are commanded to be filled with it, to be led by it, and to walk in it. We are said to be born of it, to be quickened and sanctified by it. We are warned not to grieve, resist, nor quench it. Its fruit is particularly described by Paul, which ought to be fresh in the memory of every one, who hopes he is spiritually born and spiritually minded.

But we are not expressly told to worship the Spirit, to fear the Spirit, to love and serve the Spirit, and to ascribe to it equal and undivided honors. The holy Spirit, I suppose, is not a person separate or distinct from God ; but the power of God in operation; the divine influences exerted on the hearts and minds of men. It is called by the Saviour himself the holy Spirit, which the Father will give to them that ask him, and which the Father will send in the name of Christ.

What wrong and unworthy conceptions of the justice of God, do many Christians have ! We say, that justice is the rendering to every one his due. A man owes me ; and because misfortune and poverty render it hard for him to pay, I forgive him the debt. Another has injured me, and I forgive him, because he is sorry, and promises to reform, or has already reformed. *Now do I forfeit the title of being*

just by these acts of mercy? And yet that God cannot forgive sin. His government and law would be dishonored by it. Justice demands punishment. It must be meted on the sinner, or on his surety or substitute. We are taught to imitate God in his nature, and I need not prove to you, that God is a gracious and merciful Being. The Jews thought he could and did forgive sins, but denied the power to Christ; still he claimed it by virtue of his power, authority and commission, derived from the Father, and spoke not of a substitute and of an imputed righteousness, as many who presume to call themselves orthodox. You know, that the expressions, 'the mercy of Christ,' and Christ's 'robe of righteousness' are not found in the New Testament. The atonement is only once there, and in this instance, it should have been translated reconciliation, as the corresponding word in the original generally is.

It is right to sing hymns in honor, gratitude and praise, to Christ. It is our duty to obey and love him; but we must never lose sight of the adorable, gracious, amiable and merciful character of the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That you may never forget, nor cease to honor and love your Lord and your Saviour, is the prayer of your

LETTER XXIII.

To Mr——.

Dear sir,

When we were last together, you spoke much and warmly of the humbling doctrines of the cross, of the essential doctrines of salvation ; and of the assurance, you felt, that you had embraced them. You did not view yourself, and all about you, just as I did. I found no books in your house but those which favored your darling opinions, if I except the Bible, and that was bound by the erroneous and gloomy commentary of Scott. I mentioned several books, which gave different views of Christianity ; and asked you, whether you had ever seen and read them ? You replied in the negative, and expressed your unwillingness to see, and your determination not to read them. You spoke of their fatal errors, and their immoral tendency, though so ignorant of what they contained and taught. I asked you to state your doctrines, which were so essential and saving ; and to support them by the authority of the word of God. You hesitated and blushed. You were confused and could give me no definite notions of your faith, and you had the wisdom not to attempt the *proof of what you knew not*. I then asked you *to define and describe Unitarianism, and poi*

out its pernicious errors. Here, again were perplexed ; but at length you preferred a number of charges, which I told you were false and slanderous. I found by your conversation that you knew not what we believed, nor what we disbelieved ; nor our reasons for either. I asked you, from what sources you had derived your imperfect and wrong information about heresy ? who had taught you that we were infidels, and were to be abhorred and despised ? who had abused your ears with such foul insinuations ? who had filled your mind with hurtful prejudices, and your memory with such injurious and uncharitable reports ? My countenance again told me of your uneasiness. I then asked you solemnly whether you loved Jesus Christ in sincerity ? You burst into tears and said, you hoped you did. I asked for the evidence of that love, and the foundation of even the hope. I asked you what was the example, the mind, and the spirit of Christ, and, whether you verily thought, that you possessed these marks of goodness, and gave forth signs of grace ? Our conversation was broken off by the entrance of a neighbor, and I retired. But I have resolved to write to you in order still to keep your attention and feelings alive to these important things.

Sir, I speak with plainness; but I do so for the truth and for your soul. Your great friend

hope, will, ere long, be instructed, and that you will grow in religious knowledge. Your great want of candor and charity, I hope you will have grace to discover and be sorry for; and that you will make that spirit of pride and prejudice soon give place to a spirit of meekness. I trust it is not yet your creed, that the possession of saving grace renders the exercise of the christian graces and virtues unnecessary. I shall endeavor soon to convey to you a number of Unitarian tracts and books, which I shall expect you will have the curiosity, patience, and ingenuousness, to read; to examine carefully and dispassionately. As you wish to sustain the character of a man and a christian I expect you will seize this opportunity to enlighten that ignorance, which is so disgraceful to yourself, and so unfriendly to others. I ask you not to be a Unitarian, but a candid man; and no longer to judge or condemn opinions, with which you are so little acquainted. If your minister and friends counsel you not to read and inquire, put them to silence by telling them that you will no longer entertain such unworthy thoughts of men, and their doctrines, without being able to render a reason for the prejudice that was in you. My object is not, to bring you from one party to another, but to enlarge your views and increase *your charity*. You may never adopt the *Unitarian faith*; still, if you become acquainted with it, and those who profess it, I am confident th

your feelings and conduct, in regard to it be much and favorably changed. Nay; you are thus duly informed, I shall hope you so far embrace our sentiments, that you in future throw your influence into the christian candor and liberty. Let us strive for unity of spirit, though we may not enjoy it of faith. I value the former above the latter and shall be glad to have another interview with you.

We can see Dr Watts's writings in favor of the trinity and Calvinism almost any where. In his solemn address to the Deity in reference to the personality of the holy Spirit, and his doctrine of doxy and charity united, with some others which he wrote late in life, and which he changed for the better, are in the number of but few. That you may have the eye of a humble Christian is the prayer of your friend

LETTER XXIV.

Sir,

When we were last together, we were contrasting the men and opinions of the unitarian and trinitarian denomination together. By my estimate, the comparative prevalence and progress of the trinitarian faith is alarming. *own your account* throws a mournful shade

the prospects of Unitarian Christianity. In zeal (I will not answer for the quality of it); in efficient means and measures (I will not say how good and pious they have been); in devotedness to the cause (God knows with what heavenly mindedness, not I); in large and multiplied donations (whether cordially and purely given, I say not); and in numbers who are apparently on their side; perhaps we must yield the palm to the orthodox so called. This fills me with shame and grief; but it does not shake my faith, nor lessen my value of it, nor cool my ardor in the support and spread of it.

But if Unitarians have done little compared with what Trinitarians have done, I hope they have done that little with a better spirit. They have done much compared with their means, and with the obstacles they have had to surmount. They have had ignorance, indifference, sin, error, and prejudice to contend with on one side; and zeal, bigotry, intolerance and enthusiasm on the other.

But if you examine more deeply into this affair, you will find, that these unfavorable appearances are rather specious than real. I believe that the great mass of mankind are generally inclined to peace, and that the majority of the intelligent and pious are liberal in their feelings and opinions, and are disposed to be catholic towards others. Take most of our towns, parishes, and societies, and you will find but very few

in any particular one, who are zealous and bigoted advocates for the trinity and for Calvinism. They are earnestly beset, and enlisted in the cause of proselytism by two or three, who, very often, have little to commend them but money, pertinacity, and immoderate zeal. A rich, but restless widow; an infirm, gloomy, and elderly maiden; or an aspiring deacon, or a man of visionary thoughts, of ambitious views, and fond of popularity, often affects and controls the interests of a church and society. Money is a powerful engine. It is a lever, with which men of the world presume to move spiritual, as well as temporal things.

I knew a person, some years ago, who had an easy fortune, and belonged to a class of Christians, more faulty in their discipline and worship, than in their doctrines. As he increased in wealth, knowledge and respectability, he became disgusted, or dissatisfied with the proceedings of his church. He became acquainted with the 'orthodox;' drew up articles of faith of that character, and introduced ministers also. He had money, and contributed very largely himself, and now a decided Calvinist is settled over that very church, which was once liberal. Had this one rich man been a Universalist, no doubt, he would have drawn as many *after him* then by such motives. I could mention instances enough, where money, and worldly influence have gained a temporary victory

over divine truth. A wealthy maiden lady will build and endow a church if she can frame the creed and select the pastor. The people are poor and ignorant, and sordid in their views, and will tamely permit her to choose their religion and prescribe their faith, provided it costs them nothing! There are many Esaus, who, for a morsel of meat, will sell their birthright. How many thousand people sit under trinitarian and Calvinistic preaching, because they are poor, or ignorant, or indifferent, or parsimonious! They do not like nor believe it. But a few 'religious' persons claim and exercise an authority, which the multitude want the courage, or the ability to repel.

I hear of a society, in which are two or three dissenting, or disaffected members. I sympathise with them, commend their course,---and persuade them to withdraw. I will assist them in erecting a house, and will introduce a man of parts and powers. He is zealous and eloquent, and seems to have a great deal more learning and piety, than he who has been a burning and shining, a steady and useful light for many years. The doctrine, or the mode of it, is new and excites curiosity. They who listen and attend, are noticed and caressed, The selfish principle is addressed. They are sought and of consequence here; they are not so distinguished *in their own society*. They have to depend *there upon the approbation of heaven, and to*

testimony of their own conscience. They leave the old, and attach themselves to the new. The opposition they meet with, increases their zeal, and furnishes, in the opinion of many of all ages, whether Christians or pagans, the strongest argument in favor of the justice of their cause, and the truth of their doctrines. They are nearer to God, because they surround another altar ; and nearer Christ, because they have forsaken family and friends. They have grown in grace, because they have sunk in the estimation of society. O when shall these errors and delusions come to a perpetual end! When will the professed followers of Christ know what it is to take the cross, and be new creatures in the gospel sense of that expression?

You talk, my friend, at times, as though you were doubtful and wavering ; or rather as though you had caught some of the party spirit of the world.

If you love God, and Christ, and truth, and heaven, and your own soul, and the souls of others, as you ought, these discouraging circumstances will not greatly move and depress you. You will be more patient, watchful and persevering. If we keep our eyes fastened upon the cross, it will do wonders for our fears and also for our hopes. Let them rail at us, and revile us, and slander us ; and let them increase in number, in wealth, in power---and what of that? *This is not the final decision.* Let us wait and

watch, and work, and pray, earnestly, to the end. Let us not waste our precious time with idle complaints or comparisons, but work, while the day lasts; and may we be prepared to meet our Saviour and Judge in peace! Yours, &c.

LETTER XXV.

Dear sir,

I continue the subject of my last letter. I know, that many are disheartened, and driven back from Unitarian Christianity, and attached to opposite opinions, by such contrasts and comparisons, as you have made. Indeed there are those among the 'orthodox' who frequently remind them of such things; giving them the impression, that all the prayer meetings, conferences, revivals, missionary enterprises; all the good, serious, regenerate, people are on their side. They are awed by the activity, power and number of the 'orthodox'; and won often by very low and grovelling motives. The imaginary languor and feebleness of their own cause make them doubt the goodness and success of it. They feel unsafe, where the number is small. These things have produced a *different effect on me.* They have led me to *a frequent and careful examination of my faith: and every repeated examination has strength-*

ened and confirmed it. And if these make you distrust the soundness of your present views, and incline you to Calvinism, making more prosperous and prevalent; why do you go still farther back, and seek refuge in the bosom of the Roman catholic church? For papists are more rich, powerful, and numerous. The millions of the christian world believe in the real presence, or transubstantiation, in purgatory. They pray to the virgin Mary; they pray for the dead; and believe and do many strange things. If you trust in man, if you regard numbers, why do not you go over to Rome? O you have never seen but one catholic church, you say, and many of those who worship there are ignorant and poor, Irishmen and negroes. But why do not you extend your view? Turn your eye to South America, to the West Indies, to Spain, Portugal, Italy, France and many other places. If pomp, splendor, zeal, numbers, magnificence, societies, attract, charm and persuade you; go, at once, and fall down before the pope, acknowledge his supremacy, and own your allegiance to him.

But, if the glory of God, if the truth, as it is in Jesus, if the good of your own soul, if the welfare of your fellow men;---if these are valuable and worthy objects in your eyes, the gospel will go directly to the gospel of Christ, and from that source alone will you gain your doctrine; do as *let others do* and say what they will;

will not forsake a church merely because it is humble and poor, small and persecuted. You will cleave to it with heart and hand, let others do and say what they will.

These painful comparisons have not shaken my faith. It was not built on the hope and in the prospect of temporal advantage, but on the convictions of my own mind after a long and prayerful search of the scriptures. A sense of duty bade me search, and a sense of duty made me reject those doctrines, which had so many evident marks of error; though it tore me from the embraces and society of many pleasing companions. Not that I was ever a Trinitarian, or a Calvinist; all my childhood and youth fell in a period, and was spent in a place, wherein I heard and knew almost nothing of such distinctions. I was taught something about religion; but I grew up without knowing that it was essential to my christian name and salvation to receive those opinions as true, which frail men have sealed as orthodox. When I began my Latin, politics engrossed the public and individual attention. This was a contest from which I could easily and willingly stand aloof. But when religion took the place of politics, I could not regard the controversy with the same indifference. I read the arguments for and against the various *disputed doctrines* with a lively interest. *The result is already told.*

I receive the unitarian doctrines, not becau

they are popular, and that I hope to become so by them ; nor, because they are novel and singular, and will distinguish me from the multitude ; but because to me they seem to be the true doctrines of the gospel.

If orthodoxy, as it is called, should grow a hundred fold faster than it does, it would not discourage nor move me. I think I see what gives currency and strength to the doctrines, I reject. It does not surprise me that they so widely prevail ; but it grieves me to the heart.

I more than fear, that we have not all of us a just sense of the importance of religion in any form and shape ; or of maintaining and spreading it, though it subject us to many sacrifices. We are not so pious as we should be. We look too much to men for help, and too little to God. We trust too much to human means and agents, and quite too little to the aid of heaven.

When I make this concession, I do not mean to insinuate, that in character and in the sight of God, Unitarians are worse than Trinitarians. I make no such comparisons now. Much, I believe, which goes by the name of religion and piety, will, at the day of judgment, be called by a different name. I am speaking of Unitarians without such references. We are too many of us deficient in the habits of religion, and in the duties of piety. Some of this plain reproof is but too applicable to yourself.

In your conversation on this subject you gave me the impression that you were seeking what is fashionable, not what is true ; that your desire to follow the multitude was stronger than your desire to follow Christ. You talk like one, who wishes to avoid the cross. I hope these things will touch your heart. There certainly are some things to discourage us ; but there are many things to fortify and animate us ; at least such is their effect on me. I believe that the doctrines I have embraced are taught by Jesus Christ, who is the way and the truth and the life. Why should I be afraid ? Why should I look back upon the world, except to pity and reform their errors ?

Be more frequent with the scriptures and in earnest prayer to God—and be more faithful in promoting the cause of truth. If you loved and followed Christ as you should, you would find but little time for these comparisons and complaints. Your spiritual adversary knows your weak side, and is artfully laying temptations either to keep you idle and doubting, or to subvert your faith. That you may be sober, and watchful, and stand fast, is the prayer of your friend.

LETTER XXVI.

To Rev. Mr ———.

Dear sir,

I write this letter to you with the hope I shall benefit your soul and the souls of others. Incompetent as you may deem me I may possibly give a better direction to the genius learning of the person I now address.

I am afraid that you do not sufficiently prize the importance of Christianity, nor the weight of your christian and clerical obligations. You neither seem to fear hell, nor desire heaven. You love God, and Christ, nor regard the eternal welfare of your fellow men, as you ought. You often give overwhelming evidence of your insensibility and coldness to religion. You talk about nature, when you should talk about grace. You speak of reason, when you should speak of revelation. You fasten the dazzled eyes of your audience on your fine person and graceful gestures, instead of fastening them weeping on the cross. Instead of charming their ears with the joyful tidings of salvation, you fill those serious organs with high sounding, and swelling words of vanity ; with figures, tropes, metaphors and images, which contain no light nor comfort. You address the imagination, and send her forth to create ideal and earthly pleasures. You plead with fancy, and she goes

amuse herself with fable and fiction. You appeal to reason ; and she repairs to the groves of the philosophers, and talks of matter and mind ; of cause and effect ; of the vast concatenation of being ; of the system and general laws of the universe. She takes so wide a range, and so high a flight, that a God, a Providence, and religion escape notice or are overlooked by your hearers. The heart is not touched ; or only touched by the wand of Mercury ; not by the word and spirit of God. The sleep of memory and conscience becomes lethargic ; and the thoughts and soul, instead of being lifted up to God, are bound with stronger chains down to earth. Oh that any one should so forget his errand as to seem to preach himself, instead of preaching Christ.

In your services, you tell me that you have been with statesmen, philosophers, and poets, plainly ; but how poorly do you tell me, that you have been with Jesus. I speak this to your shame ; may it be also to your profit !

You tell me how learned you are in works of genius and fiction ; how well you are acquainted with the gods of the heathen ; but how poorly do you tell me of your knowledge of the Scriptures, and of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ.

Religion is something to pierce the heart and bind the conscience to duty and to God—and to lift *the soul* to heaven. It is to make us hon-

orable and happy by first making us wi
good. The preacher is to instruct men i
and virtue. He is to view them as im
dependant, and accountable beings. L
not fear for his reputation and worldly
let a more wise and reasonable fear swal
this. Let him not thirst for human app
but seek the glory of God. Let him r
ber, that he is a shepherd ; he must fe
tender lambs ; he must go after the lost
and bring it back rejoicing.

I would recommend to you Baxter's rel
Pastor—Doddridge's lectures on the p
office ; and some of John Foster's Essa
quicken your conscience, and to arouse
ergies of your soul. Nay, I would r
mend to you a better acquaintance with th
dition, character and wants of your
'That you may have wisdom and grace to
your hearers in the path of pence and cl
truth is the prayer of your friend.

LETTER XXVII.

To Rev. Mr —.

Dear sir,

The book I borrowed of you, refut
doctrines of the 'orthodox,' and defendi
of the Universalists, I have read with :

fit and much disgust. The author seems either to handle the word of God irreverently, or deceitfully, or very ignorantly. When he speaks the truth, he does not appear to speak it in love. He seems to have all the pride, prejudice and arrogance of the Calvinist, whose opinions he endeavors to undermine, or overthrow. I cannot always see the ingenuity and correctness of his criticisms, nor the force of his arguments, nor the meekness and charity of the real Christian. He is rude and coarse and vulgar, and uses the language of the quibbling lawyer, the snarling politician, and the frequenter of taverns and caucuses, rather than the language of the scholar, or the humble follower of Jesus. I confess, the book gives me no high notions of the character of the writer. I shall soon speak of his doctrines as plainly as I can ; though I know much better what he does not, than what he does believe. He does not believe in the doctrines of Calvin ; as he would have us think. Still his views of the character of God, and the powers of man, remind us very strongly of Geneva. He does not believe in a state of suffering for the wicked after death. But what his precise and real views of virtue and piety are ; and what sense of the importance of any religion, I am yet to learn. He seems to make too light of *the means of grace*. He does not appear to *manifest that reverence and love to God and the Saviour, which are required of the devout*

Christian. I have met with other Univers not wholly unlike him. I am disgusted the self-complacency and pride, which th ten betray ; their fondness of disputation of showing their familiarity with Scripture of their readiness in quoting and applying i but little apparent attention to its true me and spirit. There is sometimes an insuff pride, or a loathsome vanity, they disco their religious conversation. They often profound ignorance, or a total disregard o Scriptures.

You may prove and disprove any thing, follow their mode of interpretation; yo send all men to a place of torment, just a as to a state of happiness.

They laugh at the notion of a hell, and seem to entertain no very ravishing thoug the joys and felicities of heaven. They much of the love of God to them, but li their love to him. Though they profess to such exalted and extended views of the ness and mercy of God, yet they are g wanting in expressions of gratitude and pr

Why do they labor so much to destro fear of future punishment, unless this fea continues to operate upon them? Why d speak and write so much on this subject? the people generally too fearful of hell?--- fearful of offending God? Do they thin want encouragement to sin? Can they

men will make the most progress in virtue and piety by living under the influence of such expressions and instructions? Why do not they shew before their hearers the honor, the prosperity and peace of a virtuous course; and the glory and happiness of heaven; and teach and exhort them to be prepared and qualified for it? Then they might escape all these fears, and save all their labor. Their conversation and preaching sometimes imply, that they wish to make a sin, a safe course. That they wish to encourage men in vice here by attempting to show the taint of their salvation, let them do what they like. I hope there are but few of that denomination, who pursue such a course. I am sure there are many, who heartily disapprove it.

It was Balaam, who prayed, Let me die the death of the righteous; and let my last end be like his! The fears of future punishment for the wicked can never be wholly subdued in the breast of him, who believes in a future state. Memory, reason, and conscience, will disturb him at times; and after all his explanations and arguments, the Scriptures will still tell him of a judgment to come, and bid him prepare to meet his God in peace. You may read the most learned and ingenious disquisitions on this subject; and when you read, you may think the reasoning logical, and conclusive, and the arguments scriptural and unanswerable; but close that volume and lay it aside, and when your mind becomes so-

ber and vigorous again, open and search Scriptures. I suspect they will leave a permanent impression on most hearts.

I do not commend the manner, in many, who claim the title of orthodox, speaking of hell-torments. In their frequent, bold, audacious, and unwarrantable attempt to excite fears of mankind, they make some gloomily distracted, and they harden others. B ——— takes an opposite course; and one seems to me equally unfavorable to piety. They are both preaching continually about the devil and hell; the one as objects to be dreaded and shunned, if God's sovereign grace will justify and enable them;—the other, as objects to be laughed at and despised—yet not so much despised, but that they shall often be the theme of discourse! And they both serve to callous the feelings of too many. I have thought that they have both multiplied the temptations to indecent and profane language. Where men, women and children, are constantly listening to such views of hell, it is not surprising that they remember an

LETTER XXVIII.

Sir,

There is much that passes for eloquence, and pulpit eloquence too, which is but imagination, fancy, mystery, noise, &c. The attention is fixed; the heart is impressed; but the mind is not enlightened, nor the heart made better. Those passages are listened to with greediness, which convey no intelligence, teach no truth, and enforce no moral precept. People love to stare and wonder, and speakers know it. We are censured by the Calvinists, because we do not preach more the terrors of the law and the terrors of the Lord; and yet I have observed how little apparent effect this kind of preaching had on those who adopted, and those who heard it often.

I have this day listened to a sermon, full of solemn and terrifying words; and if they were not uttered by a thoughtless tongue, they at least, dropped upon some dull and inattentive ears, and stupid heads and hearts. A Calvinistic minister sat behind me, who seemed to be no more interested in the discourse, than though it was on one of the most indifferent topics imaginable. He was frequently engaged in a loud whispering conversation with the person, seated beside him, who, I suppose, was of the same profession and of the same sect. His noise dis-

turbed me much, and several times I turned around, and endeavored by my meaning looks to silence him; but it was to no purpose. This is not the first time, I have witnessed such things; and they imply, that these people do not feel themselves that awe and solemnity, which they wish to inspire in the minds of others. They would have others terrified and warned, but they would escape. 'Weep yourself, if you would have me weep,' is an old maxim.

May you so grow in grace and knowledge that you will not need such aids to your piety, that higher motives may influence you to fear, love and serve God all your days! Farewell.

LETTER XXIX.

To S. Y.

Sir,

You remember our late interview, and the various subjects of our conversation. You complained of the hardness of your lot, the poverty of your condition, of your many trials, misfortunes and disappointments, and how you were unnoticed and deserted. I listened with sympathy, and reminded you of sources of comfort, and counselled you to repair to them. *I have now learned and thought more of your*

character, and address you tenderly and seriously. Yours has been a hard lot, you say; but do you not see what has made it hard? You have not sought wisdom, support, and strength from above. You have not felt and owned your dependance on God, nor committed your way and cause to him. Had you, with filial piety, devoted yourself entirely to him, he would have sustained and comforted you. How could you expect, that your path would be plain and easy, when you shut your eyes to the light which would have guided, and rejected the hand which would have held you up? You speak of your poverty. Alas! you have not sought true and durable riches. If you had properly attended to the invitations of the Saviour, you would have had a heavenly treasure, which would have made you forget, or patiently endure the evils of your present indigent condition. It is ingratitude and sin in any to neglect the Saviour; but the offence seems more strange and vile, when committed by the poor; since he showed a regard and compassion for the poor, which no other friend or benefactor ever had. He fed, blessed, taught, comforted, and associated with them. To them he preached the gospel, and offered them unfailing treasures. He became poor himself, that they might be rich in faith, hope, promises, prospects, and expectations. You have slighted the Saviour, and no wonder that you feel your poverty. Go to him,

and you shall have peace and contentment a portion, which shall not be taken away from you. You have thought to bear your trials and afflictions without heavenly aid and divine consolation, and so you have continually groined under your burdens, and gone mourning and weeping. Is this strange? You knew trial was in your way, and where you might seek a relief; and yet you have acted contrary to your knowledge, and still complain. There was a ark sailing on the flood, and you would not enter it that you might ride out the storm in safety. There was a bow in the sky, but you turned your eye from it. You have been clad with the armor of light, but you abode in darkness. The anchor of hope was thrown out to you; and you would not take it, but remained desponding. You complain that you are unnoticed; but can you not see the cause of this within yourself? Had you been careful to live a pious life, you would have been respected and esteemed by all; and you could, then, easily have endured scorn, contempt, and obscurity, which is your lot. Had you walked with God honestly and faithfully, you would not have felt desertion. You would always have had a friend nigh you, with whom to hold communion.

Your children are disobedient, ungrateful, and vicious. Behold the effect of the educa-

and example, you have furnished them. Had you obeyed God, you might reasonably have hoped for better things. You were ungrateful and disobedient to God, and they are so to you also. O may you repent of these things, and consecrate yourself wholly to your Heavenly Father ! Say, I have borne chastisement ; I will not offend any more.

You spoke of the little peace you have enjoyed, which shows how dull you have been in appreciating and improving the counsels of the word of God. You are there told, 'acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace.' Our Saviour says 'in me ye shall have peace.' Let me exhort you to believe in God and in Christ ; and then you may be of good cheer, and your heart will not be so troubled. Seek now an unfailing friend ; durable riches, and a city which hath foundations. You have built upon the sand ; now build upon a rock . You have set your affections on earthly things, and your gain has been labor and sorrow ; now set them on heavenly things.

Let me remind you, that unhappy as has been your condition in the world, your future prospects are no better. Nay, they are more dark and dismal, unless you comply with the terms of the gospel. O think of these things, while God gives you the power of thought. Let the forbearance and mercy of God excite your wonder and praise, and awaken you to a speedy

repentance, and thorough reformation. I
to this warning and friendly voice. Read
Scriptures; think of them; meditate on
Examine your heart and life; be frequen
servent in prayer, and yield your body
and spirit, to the guidance of your Father
heaven, which is your reasonable service
one infinitely most profitable to you both
time and eternity. Farewell.

LETTER XXX.

My friend,

It is long since I wrote. I would give you
reasons of my delay; but they might not be
such to you. When I wrote so often, I
without books, and without associates much
the time. I was forced into solitude, reflection
and meditation. I conversed with myself
thought and recorded my thoughts. But
ly my room was stored with books; and
dwelling with pleasing companions; and
my clerical avocations did not interfere, the
was spent in walking, reading, singing and
versation. Besides, there are seasons,
liarily unfit for, as well as favorable to writing.
There must be a certain juncture of time
concurrence and combination of circumstances
or I cannot call and arrange thoughts

for a single epistle to even an old friend. When it is very warm, I am languid; when it is very cold, —but why do I trouble you with such things?

I am sometimes almost discouraged at the great ignorance I have to contend with. People make the most egregious mistakes, and gross blunders. Many cannot distinguish between 'orthodoxy' and christian piety and virtue. There are many so prejudiced and foolish, that they think all seriousness and piety, all fearfulness of offending God, all anxiety about the soul, heaven, hell, and death, all carefulness in matters of religion—they think all this is Calvinism! They ought to be told in the plainest and simplest language, what 'orthodoxy', Calvinism, Hopkinsianism, and trinitarianism, are, and what they are not; what is, and what is not peculiar to them. Many need to be told over and over again, that piety—the love, fear, worship, and obedience of God—is not exclusively Calvinism! To forsake the vanities, vices, and sins of the world is not exclusively Calvinism. No; it is sound philosophy; it is pure religion. To keep the sabbath, to go to meeting, to be engaged and devout in the house of God; to pray in one's family and secretly, is not exclusively Calvinism. To dread the displeasure and judgment of God; to desire his favor and approbation, is not exclusively Calvinism. To be sober, watchful and devout; making religion the great business of life; feeling, *thinking and speaking of it; ascribing all glory*

and praise to God; relying on his providence, and tracing the divine hand in every event—this is not exclusively Calvinism. To be anxiously inquiring what we must do to be saved; to strive for a gospel faith, a godly repentance, and a christian hope of pardon, peace, and reconciliation; to be earnest in making every possible preparation for death; to be constantly prepared—this is not exclusively Calvinism!

To be concerned for the moral and spiritual welfare of others; to be anxious for their salvation; to grieve at irreligion, vice, and sin; to pray for, and rejoice in the repentance and reformation of others—this is not Calvinism, nor the technical orthodoxy of the day.

To speak of the importance of religion; the worth of the soul; the joys of heaven; and the miseries of hell; to exhort men to seek the one, and flee the other—this is not Calvinism.

To proclaim the excellency of the gospel; to extol the mercy of God; to pray for the conversion of sinners, and for the triumphs of the cross—this is not Calvinism.

To preach Christ and him crucified, is not trinitarianism. To dwell on his virtues and graces; to speak of his labors, sufferings, and death; to exhort and invite men to come to him; embrace him; take his yoke; bear his cross; hope and believe in, obey and imitate him; to possess his spirit; honor, praise, reverence, *love him*—this is not trinitarianism.

To speak of the exaltation, worthiness, and glory of Christ; to seek the influences of God's holy spirit—this is not trinitarianism. Alas! that one need to be so plain in these things.

You can be humble, penitent, prayerful, pious, virtuous; and yet, not a Calvinist! You can be a devout worshipper of the Father, who is the only true God; you can be daily and hourly at his throne of grace in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, without being a trinitarian. That you may never commit such gross errors as do they, who confound these things, is the hearty prayer of your friend.

LETTER XXXI.

To Mr ———.

Sir,

And what have you gained by your reason and philosophy? by your researches and investigations? You have endeavored to prove that there is no devil, and you laugh at the notion of his possible existence; and yet you speak and act, as though there certainly was one. You think you have proved, that there is no hell, no future punishment—no future misery; and you affect to laugh at others' fears of torment and wrath, and a coming judgment. But notwithstanding all this, I found you the slave of prejudice, fear and superstition. Yes—notwithstanding *your boasted emancipation; your riddance*

of error, it was easy to perceive what a mighty influence superstition and fear exerted over you, and into what a base and degrading bondage, they had brought you. Omens, dreams, sounds, signs, sights, singular conjunctures, and afflicting strokes of Providence, operated upon you with strength and energy. You were unconscious of it, or perhaps thought others were so. You made me read much of your creed, and much of your character too, before I left you; and now, I use the liberty of a commentator on both. I connected things together, and you did not.

I could see, that you had only exchanged fears, not dismissed them; exchanged yokes, not released your neck; exchanged bondage and fetters, not gained liberty, even in your acceptance of the term; much less in that of mine. If you have escaped some errors, you seem to have fallen into others quite as unworthy of a great and rational mind. And on the score of honor, peace and happiness, would it not be better to believe and fear those things, which God tells us to believe and fear, than to be cringing, shrinking and foreboding, as now you are; submitting your reason and faith to the tyranny of fancy, to creatures of imagination; and tamely bending to the vilest servitude. To fear God is a wise fear; to dread his frowns and displeasure is a reasonable dread; you can find it written in the philosophy of the heathen, and in the volume of eternal truth. You can-

not annihilate conscience and fear, nor destroy those moral powers and feelings, which are the work and the gift of the Almighty. Your arguments will do no good. God smiles on virtue, and frowns at vice. You see it; you feel it. It is written on empires and kingdoms; on social and domestic scenes. It is written on the human face, and on the human heart; on the character and fortune of men, as well as in the divine revelations. It shall be well with the righteous; and woes are uttered against the wicked. You spoke of the goodness of God, and said that love must draw us to him. But do you feel these sentiments, as you ought? Does his goodness lead you to repentance? Do you possess that holy love to him, which becomes his child, and an heir of grace and glory? Though you professed, that God had done so much for your soul; yet how little you seemed to be affected by it! And you said scarce a word of the Saviour;—no expressions of love, gratitude, and praise escaped your lips. How mournfully you differ in spirit and practice from many of the early disciples of Christ.

Let me exhort you to a religious life. Leave your disputations, debates, &c. and bring practical, vital religion home to your heart and your conscience.

You do not believe in a devil. Well, I do not say it is indispensable to your salvation, that you should. You ought to receive all the do

trines of the gospel, which you, after patient and faithful search, can find there. Your barely believing or rejecting that doctrine, will not make you happy. If you are on the Lord's side, you have nothing to fear from evil spirits; but if you are not, you can promise yourself but little comfort, whether there be, or be not a devil.

You believe in a God; then honor, worship, and serve him. Love, imitate and follow the Saviour, that you may overcome your present enemies, and be guarded against future trouble.

Say what you will; do what you may; there will be distinctions and differences between the virtuous and the vicious, righteous and wicked, good and bad. You may explain away the Scriptures, but not these. You may reason against these things, but you cannot put them out of existence.

When you lie on your dying bed, say that you and your friends are Universalists; and that you have lived a sinful and impenitent life. In spite of your doctrines, your feelings and thoughts will be very different, from what they would be, had you been truly pious. And if you leave the world serious and thoughtful, but unprepared, you cannot have that comfort and satisfaction, which conscious virtue is capable of affording. Say, there is no hell; yet your situation must be inevitably different from that of the virtuous. You will understand me here. The question is *not, whether a good, pious Universalist can be saved?* (that to me is not so doubtful;) but *wheth-*

er a base, immoral, irreligious person can be happy?

Unless you are morally changed after entering the eternal world (a doctrine not revealed to me,) you will have your evil tempers, dispositions, and habits, to mortify, confound, and torment you. If the future is to be a state of probation, how do you know that, on the whole, it will be any more favorable to your repentance and reform, than the present is? Say, there will be additional means and motives to virtue; why may there not be also additional temptations and trials? Under the instruction and discipline of this state, you grew worse and worse. Why may you not in another? Say, that the good and bad will all go to the same place. Will not their different tastes, views and characters, distinguish and separate them? If their example and influence have had no salutary and saving effect on you here, how is it probable that they will hereafter?

Will not memory of the past furnish you with a constant source of uneasiness, pain and anguish, so that in heaven, you will feel that you are in hell, when you contrast yourself with one, who has piously served God? Will you not then remember, that, while on earth, you had been rebellious and impenitent? that you had neither desired to know, nor to do the will of God? that your example had been bad; your influence, pernicious? that you had done little

to promote holiness and virtue, and much to injure them? that you had made light of seriousness and piety, and manifested no concern for the spread and prosperity of true religion? that you had seldom read the Bible, except to find arguments to support a favorite but very questionable opinion? that you had seldom worshipped God? that you had made light of the duties of piety, and neglected them? that you had lived thoughtless of that Saviour, who died, and suffered so much for you? Would you not remember, how you had insulted the goodness of God; and slighted the love and compassion of the Saviour? Would you not remember how little you have done for the benefit, and how much to the injury of society?

You had set no bounds to your appetites and passions; you had obeyed them, and violated conscience, reason, and the law of God. You had been a prodigal, or a miser; sensual, and intemperate; envious, and revengeful; unkind and oppressive to the poor; fraudulent and unjust in your dealings. In every condition and relation in life, you had been culpably deficient in duty; your feelings, thoughts and desires, had been earthly; your object had been self-gratification; acknowledging no claim, nor accountability, and owning no dependence and obligation. If you retained your memory and conscience, would not such things trouble and torment you? Would *they not make a wide and lasting difference be-*

tween you, and one of an opposite character? Would they not unavoidably make your heaven, when compared with his, a hell? Would you not then perceive the unreasonableness, would you not feel the baseness of your ingratitude? expecting so much from the goodness of God, and the mercy of Christ, and yet remain insensible, unaffected, cold, disobedient through life? Would there not be something bitter and reproachful in the recollection, that you had caught at a doctrine, and left the duty; that you had seized a hope without its proper foundation; that you thought of promises, and not of the conditions; that you had claimed heaven, but had showed no holy love, nor obedience to the God of heaven?

How different, humbling, and painful, must be your remembrances, and reflections, compared with those of the righteous and pious soul! While on earth, he had endeavored to prepare for heaven; in life, for death; in time, for eternity. While you were dead in trespasses and sins, he was sober and watchful, and alive to God and holiness. While you were laying up a treasure on the earth, he was laying up one in heaven. He daily searched the Scriptures, desirous to know, believe and obey them. He threw all his influence into the scale of piety and virtue; lived a life of faith and of earnest prayer. He had been just and merciful to his fellow-men; *taken his cross* against sin, followed the Saviour,

and loved and worshipped God. You had not been thus. Will you say, that we shall retain no remembrance of the deeds done here in the body? that our tempers, dispositions, and habits, will not follow us beyond the grave? that in a future world we shall have no more knowledge of what we had been and done in this, than we now have of a preexistence? Then, do you not virtually deny the resurrection and immortality? Do you not, to all practical purposes, believe in the annihilation of the soul? the total extinction of our moral and intellectual being? You believe that there is a heaven, and that it is filled with intelligent and happy creatures; but creatures, who have no important connexion with us, unless we fancy they will bear our name, begin their career when ours shall end; and, some way or other, owe their vital principle to us? Ponder these things in your heart. It belongs not to me to dictate your creed; I pray for your deliverance from every error. But whatever your creed be, if it encourage you in a vicious and sinful life, you ought to suspect there is something wrong in it or in you. That you may be wise, holy, and happy, is the prayer of your friend.

LETTER XXXII.

To Mrs——.

I could not but feel and express a holy indignation at the conduct of —— towards you. You are an ignorant woman yourself; you know and own it. I was glad, however, that you had sense enough to discover the unreasonable and uncharitable spirit of —— . I pray that you may have wisdom to see the hatefulness, to loathe the meanness, and to shun the toils and snares of that system, which has so unhappy an influence on your neighbor. You see how poorly she observes the golden rule. You see that her new doctrines either make her impudent, impertinent, obtrusive, proud, suspicious, and extremely disgusting in her behaviour and speech; or at least, they have not been able, as yet, to reform her. But after all, you must impute much to ignorance, and to the slanderous and vile reports of others. Those with whom she has been conversant, have done no good to her temper and piety. They have filled her ears and mind with scandal; and now she vents it upon others, that come within her reach; *which you will consider whether you do, oftener than is necessary.*

I have conversed with her several times, and found her grossly ignorant—found that she was not at all acquainted with the nature and merits of the case, and that it was of but little use to reason with her. Her mind is so dark and bewildered, her fears and prejudices so great, and she is so positive and obstinate, that you might as well reason with the tide and the storm.

With such we must be silent, patient, and forbearing, and not be discouraged, because ignorance calls us dark, and prejudice erroneous. It is sorrowful and humiliating that there are any, who will listen to such busybodies, and be led away by them. Paul mentions false teachers leading away silly women; but now, silly women lead others away; an evidence of the blindness, folly, and delusion, which prevail. They will not believe those who have had great opportunities to know, and who cannot have a strong motive to mislead them. They discredit such, and run after those who have nothing to recommend them but heated passion, presumption and arrogance. May you be kept from these temptations! I should advise you to avoid the meetings, which are held so frequently in your neighborhood. If they entice you, consent not. Let them know, that you are fully persuaded in your own mind. You ought not to spare the time; you have religious duties enough for all the week at home; and if you *had not*, I would say, devote those seasons to

reading, prayer, and meditation, and to works of mercy. Think of the good, pious Dorcas. Mrs H. expends enough on these religious meetings, which do nothing for her humility and kindness, to feed and clothe an orphan child. One of the best ways to keep religion alive in one's own soul, and in society, is to make it practical; to carry it into all the business of life, so that all our duties shall be the sacrifices of humble and grateful hearts. Farewell.

LETTER XXXIII.

To Mr ———.

My dear sir,

You are anxious about dying and your future welfare; and such an anxiety is worthy of you. You must die; there is no discharge in that war. You must stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and give account of yourself to God. Fifty years you have lived with such prospects before you; and you are just beginning to open your eyes upon them. You should have given your time, your thoughts, and your heart, to these solemn truths, long ago. But it is a blessed thing, that you have omitted them no longer; that death did not close your eyes, before your moral blindness was partially removed; that your heart was not consumed in its state of coldness and impenitence. You have enjoyed

many days of bodily health; but what a disease has all this time been preying upon your soul! You have been awake to everything but righteousness; in love with everything but Christ; alive to everything but God. How should you admire the patience, which thus waited and endured. How should you praise that mercy which, when other remedies failed, raised a correcting hand, and cut off those streams, which led you away from the fountain of good! May you not conclude, that God has taken away your strength, that you might be strong in him? that he has visited you with sickness of body, that your soul might be in health? Has he not laid you on a bed of pain and languishment, that you might seek the pleasures and consolations of religion? Has he not permitted your outward man to decay, that your inward man might be renewed? Has he not blighted your earthly hopes, that he might kindle a hope of glory? Has he not subdued the desires and appetites of nature, that you might hunger and thirst after righteousness, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ? Such questions demand your attention. All this you may consider as done for the healing of your soul. And with these means, let me exhort you, to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.—To all human appearance, you will never recover. You may be spared days, and possibly years; but they will be days of

weakness and languor. You cannot do much; but still you can do an important work, by the aid of God's grace and spirit, which may be obtained by earnest prayer to the Father through the Son. You can think deeply, sorrowfully, and fearfully of your sins; you can confess, abhor, and forsake them. You can believe in Jesus Christ, and through him seek the divine forgiveness. You can humble yourself and acknowledge your accountability to God, and your dependance on him. You can submit to his authority, and with filial dispositions and trust commit your soul and body to him, as your friend and father. Your happiness depends on your union with him and with Christ. Your prayer must be, thy will be done! If God should restore you to health, it would be your duty to bring forth the fruits of repentance, by employing all your time and means in his service. But since you are called to suffering and adversity, you are to be patient, content, resigned, confiding, submissive; relying on his providence; devoting your seasons of quiet to acts of faith, worship, prayer and meditation; imparting counsel to others; warning them against falling into your errors, and urging them to attend to religion. So long as it shall please God that you continue here, strive to be increasing in knowledge, faith, holiness and virtue. That you may so live, that when you are ab-

sent from the body, you may be present with the Lord, is the prayer of your sincere friend.

LETTER XXXIV.

To Mr —.

Sir,

You remember my expostulations with you, when you confessed your dreadful habit of drinking, and also the weakness and inconstancy of all your past resolutions to amend. You were sensible to the evil and injury ; and though you foresee the consequences, yet they appear to you now unavoidable. The habit is so confirmed, that you despair of a remedy. But though you are dreadfully fallen, your conscience is not quite seared. Your moral powers are not wholly destroyed. You can still exercise your reason. You have not sunk so low as you might and may sink. I would now suggest to you motives and rules for a thorough reform.

Consider the injury you are doing, not only to yourself, but to others. You might shine a living example of virtue and piety. Your exertions and influence might do much for the benefit of those around you. There are various duties which you owe to others, as a member of society ; but your intemperance disqualifies you. You are never intrusted with any of the

business, nor honored with any of the offices of the town. And what is the reason? You are intemperate. Instead of building up, you are undermining society. Consider what you are doing to yourself; weakening your strength; impairing your health; destroying your mental and moral powers; destroying the peace and happiness of your soul. You are sinking as much below, as you were created above the brute.

Your intemperance unfits you for social and religious duties. How can you read, meditate and pray, when heated and excited by rum? Oh, think of these things!

Consider your family. When you married, you solemnly engaged, before God and man, to sustain the character of a faithful and affectionate husband. How these promises have been forgotten, and these vows violated!

You should be the strength and support of your family; but how often do you appear before them, weak, tottering, and trembling; unable to sustain yourself, or protect them. You should be their glory, honor, and joy; but how often are you their trouble and shame! You should counsel and console; but how often you grieve and wound them! You should be their exemplar and guide; but you are in fact, only a beacon and warning! You should lead their devotions, and teach them to fear and serve God; but all your influence is on the contrary

days and nights as you make gloomy and sorrowful to them, which might bring the contentment and joy. I entreat you to resist these things, till this sin exhibits to you of its odious and horrible forms. I would advise you to abandon the use of ardent spirits together. Avoid temptations. Avoid the company and places, where you are most apt to be led astray. When your appetites and passions cry out for indulgence, let the voice of conscience, of reason, and religion, cry out against them. Summon all your moral courage and spiritual strength; and flee immediately for aid and deliverance. Those seasons were formerly given to indulgence, devoted to reflection, meditation and prayer. Turn your thoughts forward. Think of that to whom you are accountable; think of the

will lift you up and restore you. O may He impress these things on your heart, and may you speedily and wholly turn unto the Lord! Farewell.

LETTER XXXV.

To Mr —.

Sir,

I write that I may express my thoughts to you with more freedom and precision; and that you may have better opportunity to weigh and consider. You excuse yourself for absence from church on account of your deafness. You say, you cannot hear what is said, and can get no good, if you go. I find, that you have done so for a long time, and have been in the habit of making this same excuse, as though it was sufficient. But I hope this letter will suggest to you reasons for doing so no more; and that they will have their designed influence upon you, and arouse you from your spiritual sloth. I shall endeavor to show you, that you can, notwithstanding your infirmities, both get good and do good, by attending public worship. Not barely the selfish, but the social principle also; not only personal interest, but sympathy; not only curiosity and desire of knowledge, but piety, and a sense of duty to God, should make

you come with willing feet into the sanctuary. The power of sympathy and association may, and should act strongly upon you. You go to meeting, if you go with right intentions, to worship God. Notwithstanding your deafness you can feel, think, reflect, meditate, and pray. If you cannot hear the words of praise and prayer, uttered by others, you can place yourself in the proper attitude, and employ the same time in the exercises of devotion. Your feelings will be excited; your mind elevated; you will be encouraged and strengthened by the surrounding worshipers. Standing in the courts of God, you will be solemnly impressed, you will be seriously disposed. Every thing which strikes your eye will quicken your remembrance of religion, and of God. You owe this public service to your Saviour, and to your heavenly Father; and I see not how your deafness exempts you from it. It does not prevent your private nor your public worship. Your regularly attending church, even now, will be a better evidence of your obedience and submission to God, of your desire to honor and please him, than you have given for some years past. It will show, that you love the place, where his name is recorded; that you love religion; and that your heart is really engaged in it. You cannot hear the devotions of others; but it will do you good to meet them there, and see them apparently joining in

acts of adoration, praise, and prayer, and receiving instruction. You will rejoice with them and be glad to see that religion and God are so much regarded. Yes; if you have a pious, benevolent heart, if you have social feelings, and are capable of human and christian sympathies, and love the communion of saints; deaf as you are, your seat will not be found empty on the Lord's day. You will get good; you will feel an inward satisfaction arising from the consciousness of having done what you could for the glory of God, and for the cause of Christ, which you do not feel now. Your faith will be strengthened, your heart warmed, your hope animated; you will grow in grace, and in christian knowledge; you will grow more spiritually and heavenly minded. You have been a professor of religion, and yet you have been thus negligent, and often a stranger at the table of your Lord; though you are still frequent at other places of resort, where your opportunity to be nourished with the bread of life, is not so favorable!—Not so favorable? How this sentence should enliven and alarm you! What need of watchfulness and prayer!

You will do good by the force of your example, if in no other way. It will be noticed and felt by others. Actions speak louder than words. It will impress them with a deeper sense of the importance of religion, and of their duty. Your presence will countenance, encourage and per-

suade others. It will give them higher thoughts of the power, the obligations, and the comforts of religion. They will observe your conduct, and conclude, that you attach great importance to the ordinances and institutions of the gospel; that your religious habits are strong; that your piety is sincere and fervent; that you have indeed tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, that Christ is precious to your soul; that you love the habitation of the Lord, and to pay your vows to him in the presence of all his people.

Yes, you will do good; you cannot doubt it. Your presence will excite, warm, cheer and rejoice others, who are there; and it will be another motive to those who imitate your fault, to reform it along with you. You will do much for the cause of religion in your own heart, and in the hearts of your fellow men. There are too many who need to be told, that they ought to go to meeting on the sabbath, not to gratify an idle curiosity, or a literary taste; nor even simply to gain religious instruction; but to worship God in spirit and in truth. Give me leave to admonish you that your piety now is not what it should and might be. Your present course is unfavorable, and may prove fatal to it. Do what you can; and heaven will do the rest. That you may change, and find it for your soul's good, is the prayer of your friend.

LETTER XXXVI.

To Mr ———.

Sir,

Both your words and actions, the short time I have known you, convince me that you have very wrong notions of your condition, and of the nature and extent of your obligations and duties. If I understand your words and actions, you acknowledge no relations, but the civil and social, and no dependance, save on man and natural causes. You leave out religion. I would not say, that you denied a God, a Providence, and the Scriptures; but your faith in such doctrines has but little influence on you. Have you ever seriously thought that you have an immortal soul? and that you are accountable to a higher tribunal, for all the deeds done in the body? Have you thought of the duties you owe to God and to the Saviour? You have health and strength, and yet it is a rare thing that I see you at meeting. How you spend your sabbaths I know not; but I fear that they are not spent in the exercises of devotion, in prayer, in self-examination, in reading the Scriptures, and in religious meditation. If you prayed in secret and in your family, you would be likely to visit the house of prayer oftener. You indeed told me, that you

thought all that was required of you, was to live an honest life. That little word, however, is subject to a great variety of meaning. It may embrace every thing that is good---you, however, ever, used it in a limited sense. But do the gospel require something else? Does it tell you to love, worship, and obey God ; to love, and imitate Christ? Does it appear to have been the custom of ancient men to pay great attention to religion ; to private, social, and public worship ; to have much thought on these subjects ; to strive for preparation for future happiness? Is it the custom of pious people now? Then, how do you think, that you are pursuing a proper course? If religion is of any importance so are its institutions and ordinances, by which it is maintained and cherished. But what will become of it, if all were to treat it as you do? If it is a good thing, you ought to encourage it by your example and influence. If you neglect it on your conduct, you will be convinced that your way is inconsistent and unreasonable. . O man, do so, and reform !

Many spend the Sabbath, as though it were not so much the Lord's day, as the rest of the week is. They contrive to begin or end a journey on that day. They visit their friends or ride out for their health. It is the day for a man to be sick in; to see, or be seen by the physician *if on any day in the week.* Sunday was

they rise much the latest ; and they retire to rest much the soonest. Many things are done by each member of the family on the Sabbath, which should have been done in the past week. May you in future keep the day holy to the Lord, and then it will be profitable to you. I have never seen the person yet, who grew rich faster by working on the Sabbath; or who lived a more honorable and happy life by devoting that holy day to recreation and sin.

Remember that superstition does not always attach herself to religion; she oftener makes her abode with ignorance and vice. The testimony of Matthew Hale in favor of the Sabbath is worthy of being written in letters of gold. That the law of God may be engraven on your heart is the prayer of one, who feels interested in your eternal welfare.

LETTER XXXVII.

To Mr ———.

Sir,

We have had several conversations on religion. I gave you my views of the doctrines and duties of the gospel very freely and plainly. As to doctrines, I know not where we differ. You gave me to understand that you rejected the trinity, and yet you continue to go to a trinitarian

church; one that was professedly built to restore that decaying faith. You act very inconsistently; and how you can satisfy your conscience, I know not. But let this drop now. We spoke of the practical part of religion. We spoke, not only of the nature and character of Christ, but of our relation and duties to him, and of the way by which we are to be saved. You seemed to be anxious about your condition and prospects. You wished to 'get religion.'

I told you, (and now repeat my instructions with more freedom and plainness,) what course you should pursue. You must search the Scriptures and your own heart, and try your ways. You must compare your life with the word of God; and wherein you have transgressed it, you must repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. What these fruits are, you may soon learn, if ignorant, from the Bible. Put away the evil of your doings. Cease to do evil; learn to do well. One of your besetting sins, you acknowledge, is intemperance. You must set about reforming that. Accustom yourself to reading the holy Scriptures, to reflection and prayer. Read frequently those passages, where drunkenness is condemned, and sobriety inculcated. Do every thing as to God. If you wait for a sudden change, I suspect you will wait long before you experience it; and then I shall very much doubt its efficacy. If you do not seek and obtain religion, as I have directed, you will

probably either die without it, or will think you have obtained it in some of those ways, in which you will be very liable to self-deception. Misfortunes, afflictions, sickness, and approaching death, may arouse you to a sense of your danger and your duty; and you may mistake the passions and sufferings of such a season for a renewal by divine grace. Let me entreat you to act more wisely. You know, now, that it is your duty to live a pious life, if you would die the death of the righteous. Why will you continue to act contrary to your knowledge? You now know that your past course has yielded you no comfort and happiness; why, then, will you continue to act contrary to all your past experience? Pause, and reflect, I beseech you, and accept this as a token of my regard for your spiritual interests.

LETTER XXXVIII.

To Mr —.

My dear sir,

We have, in times past, had many pleasing conversations together on religious subjects. Our views of Calvinism, and some other sects of the day, of their fanatical and intolerant spirit, were similar. You spoke, with unqualified favor, of Unitarianism, and seemed to rejoice in its prevalence, spread, and prospects.

But I fear, after all, that your views and

feelings on the subject are widely different from mine. You do not consider it in that solemn light I do. With you, I fear, it is only a worldly contest, a rival system, or party which you have espoused, either because it has reason, or learning, or genius, or influence, on its side; or because it affords excitement by its novelty, and furnishes occasion for your display, or, in some way, promotes your temporal interest. Both your conduct and conversation are sufficient grounds of my fear. You do not seem to be interested in religion, as I am. You leave the impression on me, that you do not feel the power and importance of Christianity; a personal concern in it; an anxious desire of its spread with a view to sanctify and save souls. You do not seem to be pious yourself. You are negligent in religious duties. You pay not that attention to the sabbath, you ought. There is little or no religion visible in your family. You have never joined the church, though there is no creed to hinder you, where you are now. You have never submitted to the positive institutions of religion, few, simple, and attracting as they are!

You are troubled about Calvinism; but not about irreligion and vice. You are loud against bigotry, prejudice and delusion; but you are not equally eloquent in your disapprobation of sin. You have the spirit of a partizan, but not of Christ. Our thoughts of the world, of

sin, of death, of eternity, of the blessed Saviour, and of God, of piety and virtue, are widely different. Though there is so much harmony in your faith, yet its influence on us both is not alike. You show hostility to error, and indifference to truth. You appear to have made no distinction between Calvinism, in its worst features, and piety; and have rejected them both. Sir, I am a Unitarian; but still I believe that God is to be revered, loved and obeyed. Though I reject the Trinitarian's peculiar opinions about Christ, not finding them in the only guide and measure of my faith; yet Christ himself, as he is revealed in the scriptures, is precious to my soul. I desire to embrace, believe, honor and follow him. Though my views of his sufferings and death differ some from many other Christians; yet I find abundant reasons for gratitude for what Christ has done for me. I have such views of salvation, and heaven, that they seem worthy of my labor, thought and prayerful study. I have such views of the importance, of the joys, and consolations of religion, that I rejoice to find others walking in the truth; and am deeply concerned for the spiritual and eternal welfare of my fellow men. Let me recommend to you a devout and holy, in order to a happy life, and a glorious death. Let me urge you to make religion a personal concern; something that is to be felt and practised — the one thing needful! Let your pious ex-

ample show that you are the friend of Christ; that his cause is dear to you; that you feel a deep interest in the moral welfare of the souls of your fellow men; that you are praying and laboring to build up a kingdom, not of this world; and that you are seeking that heavenly rest, which remaineth for the people of God. We need such men; men of prayer and faith, and prudence, and virtue, to assist in the glorious work of bringing the people out of error, bondage and sin, into the light and liberty of the children of God. May you be one of that number!

LETTER XXXIX.

To Mr —.

My friend,

My acquaintance with you has been short, and now it is to close. I feel constrained to leave a few lines in testimony of my love for you and for the gospel.

I have met you but seldom, and, I regret to say it, never in the house of God. Sunday after Sunday passed, and your seat was empty. You were at length cast upon a bed of pain and sickness, and I was invited to your dwelling to pray for you. I need not remind you of my frequent visits, and my earnest endeavors to impart to you the instructions and consolations of the gospel.

You recovered. But with sorrow I find that you have not sensibly been profited by these afflictions and mercies, as I prayed that you might. I hoped to have seen you consecrating and devoting yourself to God; and, that as an evidence and earnest of it, you would immediately attend to the outward means of grace.

I beseech you, before the impressions of your sickness are wholly effaced, before those scenes are wholly blotted from your memory, to make a solemn pause, and reflect on your obligations and duty! How unreasonable, unwise, ungrateful, is the course you are pursuing! Does not your conduct say, that nothing but trouble will bring you to God; and that nothing short of a continuance of it will keep you near him? Let this short letter revive in your mind my prayers and counsels. O may you so lay these things to heart, that, should I see you again, I may see you walking in truth; and, if I hear from you, hear that you are rejoicing in the Lord, and serving him with gladness! Your body is restored; and that your soul may be renewed, be in health and prosper, is the fervent prayer of your friend.

LETTER XL.

To Mr ———.

Dear sir,

I find that you have, for sometime, been halting between Unitarianism and Trinitarianism. When I conversed with you, you seemed to have many fears, doubts and scruples. You knew not what was right, and what you should believe.

Now let me tell you, you have not taken a right course to remove your doubts and anxieties. You have not repaired to the proper source. You have been swayed too much by earthly motives. You have consulted your own feelings, ease and worldly interest. You have regarded the opinions and assertions of frail, arrogant and bigoted men, rather than the word of God. If you really love God, you will love the Bible better than any other book. If you desire the truth, as it is in Jesus, you will learn of Jesus himself. If you would follow the teachings of the Scriptures, you would feel no hesitation about giving up the doctrine of the trinity. Neither the word, nor the doctrine is found expressly and plainly in the Bible, which ought to contain the religion of protestants. The Scriptures teach us to ask the Father for the *holy spirit*; not to say, O God, the Holy Ghost!

They teach us to ask the Father in the name of Christ—to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus; giving thanks to God, even the Father by him; not to say, O God, the Son. They teach us to do every thing to the glory of God the Father; not to talk of paying equal and divided honors to the triune God.

You spoke of the beginning of the first chapter of John's gospel. But did not your conversation seem to cast a dishonorable reflection on the evangelist? You would insinuate that he contradicted himself. He tells you near the end of his gospel, which doctrine he professed to teach concerning Christ. He tells you plainly, that these things are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; not to the opposite doctrine.

And admitting that you cannot understand other passages, this declaration ought to silence and satisfy you. If you put any confidence in the apostle, you must believe that even he could understand these dark places perfectly, that he would not contradict this positive assertion, 'these things are written that ye might believe &c. and that believing, ye might have life through his name.' Yes, he speaks of this view of the character of Christ, as a life-giving faith. These considerations ought to set your doubts at rest. The apostle Paul seems to say that Christ is equal to God; but still he speaks *every thing's being done to the glory of the Father*.

ther; and Christ himself, when charged making himself equal with God, refused the charge, and disclaims any such pretence. The word 'equal' in Philip. 6, does not mean a perfect equality in every respect; it means a better rendered likeness, or resemblance. I will quote only three passages, which to me, are of themselves enough to silence fears and doubts of any rational and pious man. The apostle says—"It is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him." 1 Cor. xv. Christ says, 'I can do nothing by myself. My father is greater than I: the Father is greater than all.' The Father says, 'This is my beloved son.' It seems to me that you would show both your wisdom and piety in receiving these and similar instructions, and in rejection of strange and opposing doctrines taught by fallible men. I would recommend you to read books, which treat on these subjects; but I observed, you had little time to read. I am, however, that you are not so immersed

nature, of nations, and of God, should be the head, is, in fact, the most abject thing belonging to the family?

I think I discover where your difficulty lies. You are slavishly afraid of your wife, who shows her religion by assuming an authority, which both the Old Testament and the New would tell her, would she have respect to all God's commandments, is improper and usurped! Slavishly afraid of your wife, whose ignorance of the doctrines is as great as her prejudice against them! You are afraid for your money. It would cost you some time, trouble, and money, if you adopted the Unitarian faith. You are afraid of some officious friends and neighbors, whose favor depends upon your submission to them in your religious sentiments. You may think me severe; but I suspect it is only the severity of truth, when I say, you seem to love the praise, and dread the censure of men, more than you love the praise, and dread the displeasure of God.

If you would be a Christian, go to Christ, in his gospel, for doctrines and precepts. Study the scriptures without fear of man.

If you have had the folly or misfortune, to be disturbed or perplexed by Trinitarians; have the courage and honesty now to listen with equal candor to the arguments of Unitarians; and Oh! consider, that it is gospel truth, that it is the truth as it is in Jesus, which you want, to make you holy and free; and that

the fashions and opinions of this world are
ly passing away!

Your wife may be offended at what
said in regard to her. I am confident
see the time, either in this world or t
when she will acknowledge, that my
though pointed, was just. In wha
many wives can reconcile their conc
wards their husbands, with their n
vows, with their belief in revelation, a
professions of godliness, I know not.
would read their Bible, they would fir
precepts especially addressed to them, t
they have not paid that solemn attentio
sonably expected from those, who trust
born of the spirit. I know this is a delic
ject; but I know, also, that there is often
delicacy about it, if religion is true. How
of this sin, I am alluding to, will be laid
charge of those religious teachers, who h
couraged it either through a gross ignorance
ambition, I am not to say. That you n
long to the household of faith, is the sinc
sire of your friend.

LETTER XLI.

To Mrs ———.

My dear lady,

I should say, I was happy in becomi

tially acquainted with you, were it not, that the occasion of this acquaintance was so sad and mournful to you. But, since Providence hath so permitted, that where you sought refuge from disease, for those who were well, and returning health for those who were not, even there the messenger of death came; since it fell to my lot to meet you in the house of mourning; I take the liberty to write you a few lines, hoping, by them, not only to express my regard and sympathy, but to speak a word of consolation to your wounded heart. I am more inclined to this now, as you are soon to leave the city till spring, when my term here will have expired, and I may never have another interview with you. When I found you, making so early a retreat to the country, I could not but think, how changed is your situation and prospects, now, from what they were less than two month ago. I need not tell you, you have sustained a heavy loss. You feel it. You will cherish a lively remembrance of your departed friend, that you may imitate all his virtues, and bless God for giving you such a companion so long. All your sighs and tears are evidences of God's past goodness to you. Your present sorrows declare your former joys; and that your heart aches shows that it has been filled with delight. All those things, which are occasions of grief, are also occasions for gratitude to God, who has bestowed on you *such favors, and continued them to you for*

months and years. He was a wise and gracious Father, when he gave ; he is now he takes away. And how many reasons now have for drawing nigh to God in faith, and trust, since he has come so you in affliction ! I hope and trust, that you do so ; and that he will give you that peace the world cannot give, and grant you the dance and comfort, which you need. domestic and parental duties will make demands on your time ; but there will be for reflection and thought. There will be seasons, when you will bitterly remember the and painfully look forward to the future. former joys and union ; your present red care and loneliness ; and the days of sorrow and anxiety, which are before you, with sorrow to your heart, and heaviness to spirit. But in all such seasons, seek the and influence of religion. Be frequent in the Scriptures, and clothe all your thoughts and feelings with the

thee;' and also of him who hath said, 'I will not leave you comfortless.' When you think of your disappointed hopes, think of that celestial hope, which may be as an anchor to your soul, and full of a glorious immortality. When your sorrows come upon you, let them draw you near to him, who has power to soothe them. When you think of the husband you have lost, think also, that you have an unfailing friend still, ready to grant you every needed favor. When you think of the greatness of your affliction, think also of him, who would call it 'light,' and of him, who can make it work out for you an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. When you think of the greatness of your trials and burdens, think also of him, who has appointed them, and whose grace can enable you to bear them patiently.

Our sorrows weigh us down, because we endeavor to bear them alone. Our way seems dark and gloomy, because our eyes are turned from the true and heavenly light. When you call to mind your condition, remember also what helps are within your reach. Put your trust in the living God; tell him of all your fears, anxieties and cares, and implore his guidance, support and comfort. Jer. xlix, 11. 'Leave thy fatherless children, and I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.' Never meditate on your afflictions without also meditating on that gracious Being, who

has never forgotten you; who is able and willing to hold you up; and, if you love him, to make all things work together for your good.

Let the truths of the gospel enter and impress your heart; and if you have never made a profession of religion, let me advise you to join Mr ——'s church. I mention his, because you will not meet with those obstructions there, which you would in churches of other denominations; and when you have done it, nourish religion in your own soul by a holy communion and walk with God.

If you have never made a profession of religion; I can anticipate what you might reply to my advice. 'You are not fit.'---'You do not feel yourself worthy.' But still, I intreat you to go forward with a humble confidence in the grace and mercy of God, who will, by a right use of these means, give you the feelings and fitness you need.

I rejoice that you have many friends, not only to sympathise with you, but to counsel and assist you in your maternal duties of training up your children. That their lives and health may be continued, and they may grow in favor both with God and man, is my hearty prayer. I shall cherish a kind remembrance of you; and should Providence so order it, I shall be glad to see you again and often. But whether that favor is granted me, or not, I would now commend you and yours to the care

of our heavenly Father.. You will excuse the liberty I take in writing. I could not think of your going away, without carrying with you some little memorial of one, who feels interested in your temporal and spiritual welfare. I thought also, that in your hours of retirement, it might be gratifying to you to know, that you were not forgotten by one, who would have been a stranger to you still, had it not been for your grief. That God would keep, comfort and bless you, is the earnest prayer of your friend.

P. S. I send you a little book, 'A Friendly visit to the house of mourning.' I know not the author of it. I suspect he was of the church of England. There are a very few expressions in it objectionable in regard to doctrine, which I wish were altered. I like this little book. I have read it many times. I have never seen any thing half equal to it. I have high thoughts of the genius and piety of the writer. He speaks like one, familiar with the scriptures, and also with scenes of sorrow, and who knew how to comfort the mourner.

Still it is almost too learned, or written in too elevated a style, for general circulation. Ignorant people are liable to be afflicted; but if they have the Bible, they need not be without consolation. There is light there for all their darkness, and a balm for every wound; and a voice, which they can understand.

LETTER XLII.

Sir,

The manner in which you spoke of forced upon me the conviction, that you had no just views, nor any just sense of its power, and importance. You spoke of one having a low, earthly and grovelling mind with no hopes, nor prospects, nor fear of this world. God and Christ, the soul's virtue and piety, seem to be subjects which you are indifferent.

But why should you think thus lightly of religion? Why should you neglect the study of it? No other book frowns so at vice and smiles so on virtue. No other book gives such hopes, joys, courage, and fortitude; such prospects; gives such expansion to the mind and elevation to the thoughts. It shows you, how you may become wise, holy, and happy. It sets before you the greatest examples, and offers you the highest rewards of goodness. It inculcates humanity, morality, truth and justice; it soothes grief, sorrow, and gives one conquest over the world and death. It is worthy of your attention, both for what it is, and for what it may make you. What are you without virtue, what is your virtue, without religion for its foundation?

You may now know that not only the weak, the ignorant, and credulous, have become Christians; but also men of genius, learning, and virtue.

If you reject the gospel, behold what doubtful and dishonorable ground you stand on! See what a host of the wise and good are on the side opposite to you. Need I name them? No!

O give your time and thoughts now to the blessed gospel; and cease from the instruction which causeth to err. Yours, &c.

LETTER XLIII.

Sir,

When we were together last our conversation turned on books, authors, and literary subject. I found you familiar with the learning of Greece and Rome; and with the classics of a more modern date. You recurred to facts and events in history—to the opinions of civilians and philosophers; you alluded to scenes in romance; you quoted poems, plays and novels; you related anecdotes of distinguished men, with a facility and eloquence, which bespoke the accomplished scholar. But with sorrow I observed that you left out persons of the greatest moral dignity; and the most sublime, important, and interesting works. Religion seemed to be a strange subject to you.

Sir, I have met you in company, where many admired, and perhaps, some envied you. But, sir, learned and polished as you are, I have seen a poor widow taking care of an unfortunate and only daughter, who displayed more wisdom, and who exhibited greater virtues. On my way from your study, I called in to see her, as I often do. A great Bible, covered with green baize, and two or three old books, compose her library. I have sometimes compared you with her ; and you always lose by the comparison. In every thing important she has the advantage. She acts like one, conversant with heroes and philosophers of the noblest character; she speaks and seems to feel, just as though she had had your advantages and had improved them aright. She talks like a moral and intelligent being. She has more self knowledge, juster and more enlarged views of the world, of God and of eternity, than you have. You may like her be cast into adverse circumstances; but whether you are, or not, you must die. Let me advise you now to seek that wisdom, which cometh from above. Yours, &c.

LETTER XLIV.

To Mrs C.

You take a wrong view of your child's death, and it overwhelms you with sorrow. Let the light of the gospel shine upon this mournful scene, and it will not be so dark and gloomy. Contemplate it with the eye of faith, and your tears and sighs will cease. Your little daughter is dead—cold—laid in the grave! Stop, my afflicted friend. You may make different and more comforting reflections. Her toilsome race is run; the warfare ended; the victory is gained. She has gone from bondage to freedom; from exile, home; from prison to a palace; from danger to safety; from want, pain and suffering, to ceaseless enjoyment; from a tabernacle of clay to an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; from a wilderness to the paradise of God; from a valley of tears, to durable mansions of glory and felicity. She is out of the reach of temptation, trial, sin, and death. She is with her Father and your Father; and with that Saviour, who blessed children, when on earth. She is with the spirits of the just, and with holy angels. O my friend, can you not comfort yourself, in her absence, with the thought that she is present with the Lord, and inconceivably happy? *She is dead to earth, and dead to sin; but alive*

to God. Think of her as a friend in heaven and by a holy life prepare to meet her. If that little child could now address you, she not entreat you to believe and obey Christ, and to make it the language of you and of your conduct in all circumstances, *Not my will, but thine be done!* That you inherit the christian mourner's blessing, prayer of your friend.

LETTER XLV.

To Mr ———.

Sir,

I send you this in such a way that I cannot offend, and it may by the blessing of God, which I ask, profit you.

Are you a professed Christian? If so, I welcome you in the Lord. If you are walking in truth, I rejoice. But, allow me to inquire about the peace and prosperity of you. A Christian is a high title. Have you considered the import of that word? Do you know what it means? You are a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died for sin; who spake, as none other did, and who gave the words of eternal life. You are, therefore, professedly in the school of Christ, and how do you behave of faith. Now, do your temper, conduct

character, prove or indicate such things concerning you? Is there discoverable in you a growing moral resemblance to your master? I ask no what sect, party or denomination you belong to? I would only know if you belong to the church of Christ, and possess his spirit? You are born of water; but are you born of God and of the spirit according to the gospel sense of such expressions? Are you renewed in the temper of your mind? Are you created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works? In what sense may it be said of you, that you are a new creature? In what way, and to what degree have you put off the old man, and put on Christ? How may I take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus? These expressions are figurative; but they have a meaning; and do you know what they mean? Too many show great ignorance or great sinfulness. Do you keep your heart and conscience? Do you control your appetites and passions? Are you alive to God? How do you employ your time, talents, and substance? How do you treat your neighbors, relatives and friends. How do you bring up your children? What are your feelings and conduct towards those in error and sin; in poverty and affliction? In a word is it your meat to do the will of God?

Many sadly deceive themselves. They have much to say about a change of heart, and religious experience; but they make a poor exhibition of the christian graces. Many, now-a-days *show that they are Christians, chiefly by*

lation of the distinguishing precepts of the gospel. Morality is nothing—good works are nothing—humility, meekness, mercy and charity are nothing. If you only have a flaming party zeal—and adopt the prescribed Orthodox faith of the day, you may have a good hope, and a good character and many friends. May you learn and follow Christ better!

LETTER XLVI.

To S. T.

Sir,

I used to teach you Latin, when a little child. I tried to instil into you some good maxims, and to improve your heart as well as your head. My efforts have been crowned with success, and I feel a sweet satisfaction in knowing it. You are out of my sight now; but not out of my mind. I was anxious then for your progress in learning, but I am relieved of that anxiety now; and I am chiefly concerned for your growth in grace and your knowledge of religion. Some think learning of but little consequence to the poor and the laboring class. You will not be ashamed nor grieved to be told that you belong to that class; and the knowledge and virtue you have gained, will, I trust, support you in your situation, or lift you out of it.

Some imagine that common people need know but little about religion. 'Ignorance is

the mother of devotion,' is their proverb. It is the mother of a slavish fear and superstition. Too many of the rich, the learned, and the powerful like to enforce obedience and secure respect through awe and terror. They are too worldly to mind much about religion themselves, and too jealous and proud to encourage their servants to become spiritually wiser than they are !

I am glad that you have a cultivated taste and an enlightened and inquiring mind. Not that such an education is essential to one's virtue and happiness; but it may greatly promote both, and your usefulness in the world. You will adorn whatever station you fill; and secure respect and confidence, though your calling be humble. Your father was a good man; but he is dead. In the language of the world, he has left you nothing; he *has* left you what should excite your gratitude to him and to God. You are rich in many things, in which not a few are wretchedly poor.

I shall write to you plainly, and give you my thoughts on various subjects, just as they occur to me.

You have a sweet voice---so soft, clear, and melodious, the organ, with all its pipes and stops, is dull music, compared with it. When you were a child every word you uttered, every sentence you read, every expression which dropt from your lips, acquired new life and force. And how often have I been charmed by hearing you sing *your evening hymn!* It gave wings to my devo-

tions. There were voices then accompanying yours, that are silent now on earth; we hope they are still heard in heaven.

But how sorry I was to find that your pastor had introduced ——'s hymns into your society; and that you were singing them at your evening lectures. I expressed my disapprobation of it at sight, for I could easily guess what a selection of sacred poetry Mr —— would make. I opened the volume at random, and read many very objectionable passages. You confessed that you had not discovered nor thought of them before; though you now saw them in the same light, I did. This is exactly the case with a great many. They worship, they know not what. They sing with the spirit, or with enthusiasm; but not with the understanding. A hymn is read, a tune is named, the pitch is given, and the choir rise and sing. The singers are anxious to perform well; the rest of the audience are anxious about the same thing. If the tune is good and fashionable, and sung well, they listen with pleasure, and speak of it as they go home from meeting. But is this worship? Is this devotion? Worship of what? Devotion to what? The hymn book lies in the pew from Christmas to Easter. But if it takes such an important place in the services of the sanctuary; if it contains our sighs and sorrows, our gratitude and joy; if it is to assist the soul *in her breathings* after holiness; why should we

not study it, and know whether we are about to sing the Lord's song, or something totally opposed to the doctrines of the holy cross?

I heartily dislike, and verily disbelieve, many of the doctrines, and much of the spirit, and much of the poetry of that hymn book. It teaches the trinity and Calvinism. It breathes much of a warlike spirit. Much of the poetry is low. It teaches dogmatism sometimes instead of devotion. It feeds bad passions, which should fast. The soul is carried about by the winds of diverse and strange doctrines, and led into the regions of fancy, frenzy, and gloom; not borne on the wings of faith, hope and charity up to the throne of God.

I might make similar observations on many of the hymns and sacred songs in other collections of the day.

Many of them use the holy and reverend name of God, with a shocking familiarity; and also the glorious name of Christ. Many of the expressions breathe a carnal, not a pious spirit; and indicate a sensual, not a sanctified heart.

Truth lies in the bottom of the well. The poets are not always deep thinkers, and fly above it. They must have rhyme, and figures and metaphors, and as much religion as these will bear, if themselves possess it. Pious poets are not always sound theologians; and when they sing their errors, multitudes are ready to join in the chorus. Study sacred poetry; and when

ly clergyman, who in the language of de
pays no proper regard to truth and senti
I know this is harsh; but I know also, a
mournful need of the harshness. You
heard of the minister, who had Watts's
and Hymns sung through in course. Su
ple must say nothing about popery. The
few hints may be a lasting benefit to you
heartly prayer.

LETTER XLVII.

To Mr ———.

My dear sir,

Many opposed to us in doctrine, are
not against the name Unitarian and

those who are our friends, are still grieved and scrupulous about the name. They are sorry that it is adopted ; and also, that we have appropriated any distinctive appellation. There are those who show no uneasiness, when they hear the words, Hopkinsian, Arminian, Calvinist ; but their ears are pained, when ‘ Unitarian ’ is pronounced !

I regret that anything should have justified adding this name ; but as I would not glory in it, so neither would I be ashamed or afraid to bear it.

To me there seems to be a necessity, a sad necessity of adopting some name to designate us ; and I know of none, better on the whole, than the one now in common use. Why does it not sound as well as Trinitarian, or Methodist ? Is it less scriptural ? Were a man to announce himself to a stranger to these different religions, by either of these titles, he would tell him but little about his faith.

Under existing circumstances, I like the name Unitarian. There is something in the sound of it more in accordance with the spirit of the gospel, than its opposite. It breathes harmony, good will, peace and amity. There is something more pacific in it than Trinitarian. It is as needful to say, a trinitarian Christian, as a unitarian Christian.

Had we assumed the title Christian solely, it would have savored of arrogance and vanity ; it

would have insinuated, that none were Christians but ourselves;—or of hypocrisy; for there is a large and growing sect by the name ‘Christians’ already; and though I rejoice to know there is so much connexion and sympathy between them and us, and desire that our ties may be multiplied and strengthened, yet there are now differences in opinion and practice, which distinguish and separate them from ourselves. I wish them success in the search and defence of truth; and I wish that we might gain a little more of their confidence and charity.

I call myself a Unitarian to distinguish myself from Trinitarians; and I am pleased to sympathise and cooperate, in many things, with the large body, called Christians, not because I agree with them in every article of faith; but because my disagreement, I trust, will not draw down upon me their wrath and abuse, nor brand me with the name of heretic or infidel.

It is often objected to Unitarians, that they ‘have no creed;’ and to refute it, many have been given to the public from time to time, in our books, periodicals, and papers. But I would not have even a Unitarian impose a creed upon me. He may repeat his own, and I will listen to it with candor. But if he will not do the same, then, fie upon him! He has not the true spirit of a Unitarian. For one, I am not anxious that there should be a creed, unless it

be so general, that it amounts to none. We assert, defend and encourage the right of free inquiry, of private judgment, and the sufficiency of the scriptures; and established formularies of faith are opposed to these. Let each one speak his mind, and what he conceives to be the truth, and in love. Let him urge it upon others in the gospel way; and instead of being angry or impatient, that he is not followed, let him find contentment and satisfaction in another way; viz. in the reflection that he has endeavored to enlighten and reform him; and has used all the weapons, which Christianity furnishes.

The essence of Unitarianism, as I take it, is purity of heart, righteousness of life, and humbleness of mind—a single eye to the truth as it is in Jesus—a spirit of liberty, peace and charity. It sends us to the Bible for our religion. Thinking thus of Unitarianism, I rejoice in its success, and cast in my mite to promote its cause. I would, in imitation of others, here set down my creed, not as challenging the subjection of my brethren, but as showing my liberty, and giving others opportunity to show their patience and candor.

I believe in one God (revealed to us in scripture, as our Father) and in Jesus Christ his son, our Lord, and Saviour—the one Mediator between God and man.

I believe that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are the only sure and suffi-

cient guide in faith and practice; and that every one has a right to search and interpret them for himself, and that Christ is our only Master.

I believe that a holy heart and a righteous life are required of us in scripture, and that sin is a transgression of the laws of God. I believe that there is a gospel faith, hope, and charity; and that charity is the greatest of the three; and that, without it, other things profit us nothing.

Indeed, not to weary you with many articles, and yet to embrace many, and all that are needed to our salvation, I believe that we ought to be learners and followers of Jesus Christ in temper and conduct.

And if every one would keep his eye upon the Saviour, and feel the importance of possessing his spirit and copying his example, he would give himself but little trouble about names and creeds. That you may be truly a Christian, is the prayer of your friend.

LETTER XLVIII.

Sir,

It seems to me, that you are not taking the right course to get to heaven. You study too much, and pray and practise too little. You might obtain the prize you profess to be seeking, if you sincerely desire it, with less trouble and more honor to yourself. The scriptures tell you plainly, that by penitence, faith, holi-

and virtue, you may be happy. If you to be happy in this way plainly pointed the gospel, you need not indulge in these lies and speculations. You can entertain doubt as to the safety of a pious life. And not your present search intimate that you for the faith, without the practice enjoined in the gospel? that you do not wish to feel its effects, nor observe its commands? that you do not take refuge in the goodness of God without being good yourself? that you wish to be saved that Christ has died for you, and that you need not die even to sin? that you would have discipleship with Christ without repentance or obedience? that you would lay hold on the promise without purifying yourself? that you would have the prize without running the race? that you would wear the crown without bearing the cross? Think of these things, and you will find that the instruction, which causeth to err. The scriptures will show you a more excellent way than any other directory. If you really wish to be pious and virtuous, you have no need of a book, which denies the doctrine of a future state; and if you do not wish to be truly pious and virtuous, there is something mean, and dishonest, and unreasonable, and extremely ungrateful, as well as dangerous, in the search. Learn of Christ, and give your heart to him. Your conversation, your reading and researches, and too of your conduct, since I knew you, have

led me to suppose that you wanted a religion that would permit you to be a beast or a devil in this world, and make you still a saint and an angel in the world to come!

What would you think of the man who was daily studying how he might break all the laws of the land, and still escape detection, and punishment—still sustain a good character and be happy?

I am the way, and the truth, and the life, saith the Saviour. Make it your study to know and follow him. The best way to get rid of your fears, is, by a course of virtue and piety to animate your hope. Only choose and pursue the path to heaven, and you may avoid much of present, and all future evil. O consider these things, and be wise both for time and eternity! Yours, &c.

LETTER XLIX.

To Rev. Mr ———.

Dear sir,

There are some besetting sins of our profession, which I would place before you in that bold and striking light, which may do much to prevent your committing them, unless your temptations are very strong and peculiar, or your stupidity, gross.

The minister is a shepherd of his flock. If

single sheep go astray, it is his duty, and for his interest, to bring it back. Like his Master, he is supposed to have a tender and feeling heart; carefully and constantly watching his society; making himself acquainted with the temporal and spiritual condition of every member, that he may be a helper of their joy, a soothing of their sorrow, and speak a word of comfort to him that is weary. But in doing this, let him remember that he should be the common friend of all; and while he seeks information respecting the religious or moral state of any of his people, he is to be cautious, of whom he receives this information, and also, what use he makes of it. He must give no encouragement to the tongue of prejudice, envy, slander and calumny, to poison his ear with their evil, unkind, and malicious reports. If he listen to tattlers, busybodies, whisperers, and gossips, (and such there are in too many of our parishes) who love to talk, to expose others' weaknesses and infirmities, and to blacken the fairer reputation of their neighbor; if he listen to such persons; if he give them liberty to prate, his memory will soon be the store-house of scandal. He will be the slave of prejudice and suspicion. He will feel no confidence in, nor respect for his people. He will learn to think meanly of them, instead of charitably and affectionately, because he knows their faults, heightened and distorted by meddlers and tell-tales; and they will learn to despise him

because he has known their faults from such sources. If he have occasion, let him obtain this kind of knowledge from the candid and charitable; from those who will heartily grieve along with him on account of the errors and sins of others, and will assist him in correcting them; who will not speak of them with lightness, triumph or malignity, but with benevolence and pity.

Let me say to you, then, discourage all gossips. Show your disapprobation of them. Lead them to confess, or at least to think of their own failings. Watch opportunities to make such persons look into their own hearts. Do not affect an over curiosity and interest in the secular concerns of your people. You can let them know that you delight in their prosperity and happiness; but above all, let them know by your precepts and example, that you have no greater joy than to see them walk in the truth—in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Let them know that you are a religious man; and feel that you are watching for their souls, as one that must, and expects to give account. Avoid telling anecdotes and stories merely to excite admiration or laughter. Some acquire the fame, and are pleased with it, of telling witty and curious stories. The story is listened to and repeated, because it came from the clergyman! Abhor and shun such a practice, so inconsistent with

the dignity of your office, and with the character of one, who is anxious to seek and save souls. I speak now with reference to those stories and anecdotes, which waste time, raise mirth, contain no important information, and leave no good, serious impression. Keep your Master's example in view here. His parables are replete with instruction ; but he does not create boisterous mirth, and provoke laughter. No ; he reads an interesting and solemn lesson to the heart. Your acquaintance with the world, and your knowledge of books will enable you to present your people with remarkable traits in the characters, and striking passages in the lives of other men ; with instances of rare virtues, and great sufferings—how the one was formed, and the other endured ; and with the wise maxims of the ancients. In such ways you can enliven your conversation, and make it highly entertaining and instructive. You will enrich their minds with the most important facts, precepts and sentiments. You will make them acquainted with those great and good men, whose example, labors, and wisdom, have enlightened, guided, and blessed the world.

In your intercourse with your society, be affable, cheerful, and communicative; but not light and trifling. Some ministers indulge in that idle and playful sociability, which defeats the very object, they should aim at. Some of your parishioners are anxious and concern-

ed about their souls, and would gladly unbosom their feelings and thoughts to you. But whenever you meet them, it is in that jovial way, that discourages and repels them. They take it for granted, that you are unconcerned for them; so they lull their fears to sleep, or reveal them to somebody else, who knows how and is willing to sympathize with them, and afford them some religious instruction and consolation. Many have with disgust, indignation, or grief, left their pastor, and place of worship, and joined other societies and denominations, because their own minister was wanting in his duty.

You give others high thoughts of the scriptures. They are the fountain, from which you draw the living water to quench the thirst of the anxious soul. You tell your people to read and reverence the Bible. But you are very apt, unconsciously perhaps often, to form the habit of trifling with serious things; making an unwarrantable and unholy use of the scriptures.

The words of the sacred penmen should be ever dropping from your lips, and seasoning all your discourse both in public and in private, so that your profiting may appear to all men; that others may know, that you read and regard the Scriptures; and that your religious conversation may edify and comfort them. But not a few, even of our profession, turn this sacred book to most unholy purposes; using it so as to show their advance in the lowest kind of wit,

not their growth in grace; eking out with a scriptural allusion, or quotation, every sentence, with as much thoughtlessness and gaiety, as though it was Hudibras, or Don Quixotte, or Shakspeare. To prevent being misunderstood, I will give instances, though I do it with sorrow. You tell me of a person, who has deceived or defrauded you. I make the comment, 'You were a stranger, and he took you in;' using those affecting words of the Saviour in a most irreverent manner. Again; a clergyman, instead of saying that his appetite for dinner was increased by the mental and bodily labors of preaching, says; 'I generally hunger and thirst after the word;' playing upon the words, and turning to ridicule the beatitudes of the Saviour! Again; one says of his wife, or domestic, if the lamp burns dim, or goes out, 'She is a foolish virgin.' Another joins with the vulgar and deistical, in calling every marvellous and strange report, a 'fish story;' thus turning that merciful miracle, which has not yet been satisfactorily disproved, and stands in the Bible, and is mentioned by Jesus Christ. when discoursing on things the most sublime and interesting—into an occasion for sport and mirth!

But I will not enlarge on this topic. You know my meaning, and you know the peculiar temptations of clergymen to commit this sin. They necessarily become familiar with the language of *religion, and of the Scriptures; and unless*

they cherish a sacred veneration for the word of God, and for their profession too, and keep the fire of devotion constantly burning, (especially if they have a natural turn for wit,) they will fall into these unbecoming and demoralizing practices. You know, that the Bible has been called a riddle, and a jest book, by infidels, and it is a grievous thing to see those, who are set for the defence of the gospel, and who preach the gospel, still apply it to such unholy uses themselves!

To be earnest and faithful in the discharge of all your duties, is the way to gain the respect and esteem of your society. Nothing will exalt you so much either with them, or in the sight of God, as deep and habitual piety, and constant devotedness to your profession. Read the lives of those clergymen, who were distinguished by their virtues, graces and labors. Think daily and seriously what important relations you sustain to your fellow men, to your Saviour, and to your God. Think how much good it is in your power to do.

In your preparations for the desk, and in all your public services, let it be your great care to preach Christ, to please God, to convert sinners. If your heart is properly engaged, your mind will go along with it; and you will be eloquent without thinking of it. He that winneth souls is wise; that you may be endued with *this* wisdom, is the prayer of your friend.

LETTER L.

Dear sir,

At our last interview you were forward in declaring your sentiments in regard to the future condition of the impenitent. Indeed, I frequently find Universalists and Calvinists openly avowing their peculiar opinions, as though on them hang all the law and the prophets. For myself, I love to discover that a man is virtuous and pious before I know to what denomination he belongs. I stated my objections seriously and plainly; and I now send you some after thoughts on the same subject.

You know I am not a Trinitarian nor a Calvinist. When I speak of sinners, I mean those, who have abused the light, the advantages, the time and talents, they had—who have transgressed the laws of God. It seems to me, that both your doctrine, and the manner in which you exhibit it, are unfavorable to virtue and piety. By removing the restraints, which the fear of future misery, or punishment, imposes, you deaden the moral and religious sensibility of men. It encourages them in the neglect of devotion and piety. They satisfy themselves with a religion, which has but little good influence on the heart and character. You speak of the goodness of God; but not like one who properly feels it. I can find no scriptural authority for the



the Bible again, and your argument
weight. I have read one book, in
doctrine was supported in this way.
gifts and callings of God are with
ance.' Therefore, you will be safe
if you do die in a state of impenite
I tell you, this is not the meaning of
Many passages of scripture are thus
those who love to build up a favor
In this way it would be an easy thi
any doctrine from scripture.

The Bible reveals a God, who
good, gracious, and merciful, but
and just. He is set forth as susta
fectly moral character. By a rig
his, he has given us laws; he con
presses his displeasure at sin, and his
of holiness. He rebukes the one,

or disposition, and copy his example. He expostulates with those, who call him Lord; but do not obey him. He says, ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Now if you do not obey him, can you with any propriety, or truth call yourself his friend? And while in heart and conduct you are an enemy to him, how can you lay any claim to his notice? If you do not take your cross against sin, and imitate your Saviour in piety and virtue, do you not deny him? Are you not ashamed of him, and of his word? And has he not pronounced an awful sentence against those who do so? I would ask you a few plain questions. Do you love God? Then you keep his commandments. Do you love Christ? Then you honor and follow him. Have you any large and just notions of heaven? Have you a strong hope of dwelling forever with Christ and good men? Have you a just sense of the value and importance of religion? Then, why are you so cold and indifferent, to all human appearance, about the prevalence and progress of Christianity? Why do you not lament the ignorance and sinfulness of your fellow men? Why do not you rejoice in every triumph of divine truth; in every instance of moral and religious improvement? Why do you neglect the plain and positive institutions of the gospel? O pray to God! Be baptised, and profess your faith in Christ openly; and like him, make it your work and pleasure to do the

will of your heavenly Father ! And shall be well with you. You reject the istic views of future punishment. I surprised at this ; but you seem to make ference between Calvinistic and gospe of futurity. The work and the recomp reward--the sin and the punishment, are ultaneous. The substance or spirit of the doctrine on this subject is this; we shall py or miserable according to our moral or according to our characters. Many think too much of heaven as a place, little as a state. What arts and metho use to secure heaven ! See this man, money, his oil, and his wafer, just clc eyes in death ! See this person convicted, and triumphing over the king of and exulting in his strong and immortal. And this person also, equally confident last, though not so moved and melted have no good evidence that either of really changed as to his real character ; he has formed any pious dispositions as

ought in the Bible ; and even admitting the
 rine to be true, (which I do not) we can dis-
 r a powerful reason, why it should not be
 aled, while we are probationers on earth.
 e only think of God, and Christ, and heaven
 our duties, as we ought, we need spend
 ittle of our time in disputing about the mode
 duration of future punishment. God is just
 merciful, and will do us no wrong. For-
 my freedom and earnestness. The truth
 is in Jesus does not produce its proper ef-
 on us, if it do not make us holy and free
 sin. If you bear these things in due re-
 mbrance, I am persuaded they will have a
 ng tendency to change your meditations,
 faith, your conversation, your heart, and
 acter. My prayer is that you may hunger
 thirst after righteousness, and that you may
 e it your meat to do the will of God. Let
 advise you to read the preceptive and devo-
 il parts of scripture frequently, and accom-
 r the reading of them with devout prayer
 you may know yourself, your duty, your
 ions to your fellow men, and to your God,
 to your Saviour---that you may live a right-
 life, and die a righteous death. That this
 be your life and death, is the prayer of one
 feels deeply interested in your temporal
 eternal welfare !

LETTER LI.

My friend,

I write to you often, and I now do it with but little use of my eyes, owing to their great weakness. I wish also to be learning to do as many things without them, as I can, so that should I ever be totally blind, I may not be wholly unprepared for such a condition. As soon as I know where the line is to begin, I shut my eyes and rest them till I have nearly written across the paper. I can favor them a great deal in this way.

I shall write in haste; so you will have what comes uppermost; and you will not be surprised to find that many of my thoughts are directed to my profession, and particularly to the difficulties attending on it.

What various hindrances we meet
In coming to a mercy-seat!

And besides those, Cowper had in his mind, there are many others, which he is often made to feel, who leads in the devotions of a church, or a family. Want of time, order, attention. The devotions are crowded into a narrow and improper space. All is hurry, bustle, and disorder. Something is always the matter. In the morning, some are not up—others are engaged---gone out to work---the children are noisy---somebody comes in. They are in a great haste. You must omit reading, or read

but few verses. You have reason to suspect, every moment, that one, or more, is indifferent; that one or more is grudging the time thus spent; waiting with impatience for you to say, amen; thinking of what he is going to do, not of what he should be doing at that time. When you say grace, all are not ready. The door is opened just as you begin, or before you close. When you return thanks, half have left the table. You must be short; for they are in haste, or very hungry. Their appetites, or passions, or avarice are against you. Prayers at night are attended with greater difficulties. They are put off till late, for some of the principal members of the family to come in. Then the children and servants are gone to bed, and should be so. Those who remain up, go to sleep while you are reading, or keep gaping and nodding, so that the prayer has but little of its intended effect.

Very often it happens, that they will not wish to have the Bible read; and that the servants, children, and hired help, are not called in. In many instances, the man of the house goes off to his work, leaving you and two or three females to pray by yourselves; so that, though it is a house of prayer, it is not a praying family. Those very members of the family, who, it may be, most need the benefit of these instructions and devotions, are, in various ways, excluded and denied them. You are

continually made to know that the services are not interesting to all, if to any.

And also on the sabbath and in the church, they are coming in till the first prayer is offered; and many things break the silence and interrupt the attention during the second. The sooner ended the better.

You cannot imagine what a chilling effect these things sometimes have on me. How they disturb, confuse, and distract my mind. It is not a difficult thing to pray earnestly, when others are praying with me; but to perform the duty under these unfavorable circumstances is peculiarly arduous and trying. I cannot collect my thoughts nor fix my attention. Perhaps also one, or more, is of different sentiments. Such often attend as a mark of respect, or from even a poorer motive; considering it not a season for their devotions, but a time to indulge their own curiosity or exercise their patience and submission, and to pay a compliment to me.

There is but little attention paid to public and family worship, compared with what ought. Many families have so little order and regularity, that they are seldom together at the proper season, morning and evening, for worship. They might soon and easily arrange their duties and business so as to find time for the duties of religion; but alas! they have no deep sense of the importance of religion.

How many of those who are very constant

in their attendance on the services of the church; regard chiefly the sermon. If the preacher is learned, eloquent, and sound in the faith here—he may read what hymns, and offer what prayers, he pleases. Worship and devotion are objects of small consequence with them. Much of the going to meeting of the present day seems to be to gratify a social feeling, a literary taste, a distempered mind, or an idle curiosity, rather than to grow more holy and devout, and to adore God. I will tell you some of my reasons for thinking so. They seek the most gifted, and popular, not the most humble and pious. They go professedly to hear the sermon. Their conversation and conduct show more love of novelty and excitement, than either the possession or desire of sober evangelical piety.

I need not caution you against running after every preacher, that comes within seven miles of you. Your minister is not accounted very learned, nor much of an orator; but he is known as an exemplary Christian, and a faithful pastor. I have heard him myself occasionally, and liked him. I should prefer him to one of more popular talents, but deficient in those graces and adornings of the soul, which give it its nearness to God, and renders it acceptable in his sight. Yes, I would have a good, humble, pious, meek, devout man, to guide my devotions; to plead with God for me;

to be the angel of the church where I worship; to be a son of consolation to me in times of affliction. Yes, in a work of so much importance, I would seek a man of faith, piety and virtue; one whom, I could hope, God would regard with approbation. Pray for me, that I may be wise to know the path of duty and faithful to pursue it.

Yours, in christian and friendly bonds.

LETTER LII.

My dear friend,

I shall fill up this short letter with brief and disconnected sentences and hints. I may have said the same things to you a hundred times; but perhaps never exactly in this form. If I have, you will still find an apology for me. Where our Saviour says, 'I and my Father are one,' he does not say, one God; nor is the word God or Father understood; for, 'one' is in the neuter gender. It is union of will, purpose, and action—we are both engaged in the same cause of truth and mercy. In Rom. ix, 5, the passage, 'who is God over all blessed forever;' as it is taken by the trinitarians, proves too much; for it makes Christ, not simply equal, but superior to the Father and the Holy Spirit; *which* is contrary to the 'orthodox' doctrine. If

they say that, 'God over all,' means 'over all things' only, then their orthodoxy disappears. Unitarians admit, that Christ is superior to all things and to all beings, except the Father.

Many denominations have much to say about merits, as the Papists, Lutherans, Calvinists, Methodists. The word is not in the Bible. Remember this, when you hear ignorant or dogmatical people talking about merits. The Bible says, we are saved by grace. We are to ascribe our salvation always to the grace, the love and mercy of God. While we hold fast this truth, let us also embrace the faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He as our Mediator and Saviour suffered and died for us. If we are guided by Scripture on this point, we shall be filled with gratitude both to God and to the Saviour. Other books when treating of our salvation, seem to rob God of all his grace, love, benevolence, mercy, and compassion. Their authors reason and write as though they cared more about a favorite system, than they did about the character of their heavenly Father.

The word 'atonement' occurs only once in the New Testament, and there it should be translated reconciliation, as it is in other places. Many use the expression, atoning blood, as though it was in the gospel. In Rev. i, 5, Christ is said to have washed men from their sins in his own blood. Some Greek copies, instead

of washed, have a word, which signifies to release, redeem, deliver. Again, Rev. vii, 1 there were those who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But here a different word is used for was. These are very figurative expressions ; but how frequently are they used and alluded to in the sermons, prayers, and hymns of the ' orthodox.' ' Christ's robe of righteousness,' and the ' righteousness of Christ,' are often repeated and doubtless convey wrong notions to those who hear them. Gurney's dictionary of the Bible defines, *sober*, to be considerate, thoughtful, humble, grave and temperate: *soberness*, to soundness of mind ; he says, *sobriety* includes prudence, gravity, humility and temperance. Enthusiasts and bigots, those fond of excitement, noise, and strife, would do well to think of this. Yours, &c.

LETTER LIII.

Dear sir,

I shall write you just such a letter, as I should like to have occasion to write frequently.

How much good one rich, pious, and benevolent man can do in a country parish.

I spent a few days with the Rev. Mr — in —, not long ago. It is a neat farming town. Its inhabitants are sober, pious, industrious ;

thriving. One would be favorably impressed, go where he would, in the town.

I had been acquainted with the minister, when at the University; and now, he told me of his happy situation, and the occasion of it.

Said he, When I settled here, my prospects were not flattering; my salary was small; my hearers, inattentive to the duties and importance of religion, very ignorant, and divided. Next year a wealthy gentleman from the metropolis, tired of a city and mercantile life, purchased yonder farm in my parish. It had been owned by a discontented and peevish man, who contributed nothing to my support, and did much to destroy my influence and usefulness.

Though I was glad to part with him, yet I trembled at the thought of what might be my expectations from his successor. The buildings were put in repair, and Mr A. took possession. He soon called upon me, and asked me to his house. I went, and was respectfully and kindly received. He spoke to me of his love of the country, of retirement, and of agriculture; and showed me his library, to which he told me I should have free access at any time. This seemed a fair prospect to me. 'I knew your character,' said he, taking me by the hand, 'before I bought. That and one other consideration, (shedding a tear and making a pause as he said it) determined me on this spot. I anticipate your fears, and hope to dispel them. True, I am rich;

but I trust you will have room to bless God that I am so. I ask your society and desire your esteem. You will assist me in my religious course, and I shall add my influence to yours in promoting virtue and piety in this place, where I have resolved to spend my days. I have lived in the bustle of a city, where reflection and composure were difficult; where seasons of retirement were few and interrupted; and where company and worldly cares often broke in upon my devotions. I shall converse now more with nature, with myself, and with God.' Here his carriage drove to the door, bringing my wife, and as she entered, we were conducted into the parlor and introduced to Mrs A. and the children. Nothing has since occurred to embitter the remembrance of that pleasant interview. We returned from that visit, as we had never returned from one before. He has much more than answered the expectations, he then excited. He and his family have ever manifested the most cordial respect for me and for religion.

Much has been done for the suppression of vice and intemperance among us, and for the encouragement of virtue. Our tavern was once the abode and resort of idle, low and profane persons. I told him of the evil, and suggested a remedy. My views were met and seconded. He soon found an opportunity, and bought the tavern, and placed in it a family of sober habits and

correct principles. It is now one of the best stands in the country. It is cheap, neat, and commodious. Nothing immoral and irreligious is seen there, and it is resorted to by the best of company.

So, in a few years both of the stores came into his possession, and are still under his control. We have no bowling green, no race grounds, no tavern hunters, nor grog drinkers.

We were in want of several kinds of mechanics. He carefully supplied this deficiency, and patronized such men, as enlarged and adorned our society. Our town had long been corrupted by a skillful, but unprincipled physician. Many had been the difficult and obstinate cases, in the treatment of which he had been successful. But though his medical talents and attainments were worthy of a professor's chair, still he was a moral pestilence, polluting the heart, and contaminating the soul, wherever he came exercising his healing art on the body. He was cut off suddenly in the midst of his years, and in the midst of his sins. Mr A. consulted with a friend in town, and ere long, Dr R. came to occupy the vacant place. He was recommended as being a scholar, and well-read in his profession; and we have since found that these were not the only qualities, which rendered him valuable in our estimation.

Mr A. has paid great attention to the children and youth. He distributes many books among

them; is a generous patron of our schools; and has expended much on a library for the young. It is expected of all who enjoy these favors and privileges, that they will be found in no bad company; that they will be constant and well behaved at church and school, and observe on all occasions, a modest and decent deportment.

Some of the poorer and feeblér part of the parish are expected to dine with him every Sunday, where they not only get wholesome food, but religious instruction and consolation.

Though he is thus promoting the happiness of all around him; yet he does it all silently, modestly, and indirectly, without apparently seeking anything but the satisfaction of doing good. He has been an invaluable blessing to me and to this society; and it has not a little increased my happiness to find him contented and satisfied—as though his efforts had been crowned with all the success he had expected, and as though he had met with all the returns for his generosity, which he was looking for. Indeed he has been, and will be rewarded. He is regarded by every member of the parish as an excellent man. They love him, and he knows it.

That classical school was founded by him. It is his bell that calls us to church; his clock, that gives us the hour; his Bible that lies in the desk; and his organ, that enlivens our devotions. ‘His,’ did I say? No, they are only

a few of the benefits he has conferred on us.

He has improved our gardens, our orchards, our flocks and herds ; and in every respect, greatly advanced our social and religious interests. Though in many things so raised above us, yet has he consented to walk in paths, where he could be seen and followed; and has been an example in virtue and piety for us to admire and imitate.

His children have amiable dispositions, have caught his spirit, and are treading in his steps. They have mixed with those of their age and sex in the parish, and their influence has been a happy one. We have no profane and dissipated persons among us; no religious excitements and contentions; and all, who are of a proper age are communicants. Heaven has wonderfully blessed me in my prayers and exertions for the good of this flock.

As I staid over the sabbath, I attended public worship with my friend, the minister. The impression made there will not soon be effaced. Every thing reminded me of the day and its duties; every object around told me that religion was the most important, the most noble, and the most pleasing thing in the world. But I must leave this account unfinished ; and repeat my wishes for your temporal and eternal prosperity.

LETTER LIV.

Dear sir,

I gave you some encouragement, that I would make you out a catalogue of books for a religious Library. I would do it in this letter, but I suspect that you do not need such assistance so much now, as you did then.

Still I will mention some books, not in the order of their merit, but as they come into my mind.

The Christian Monitor, which contains a whole body of practical divinity. The Christian Disciple, first and second series, and Christian Examiner. You will find in these periodicals a great deal to interest and instruct.

The Friend of Peace; a work which every Christian, and every humane and merciful man ought to love; by Noah Worcester.

Bible News; and The Atonement, a display not of the divine wrath, but divine love; by the same author.

Carpenter's History of Unitarianism.

Dabney's Annotations on the New Testament. Here you will find many difficult passages explained.

Locke's Paraphrase on several of Paul's Epistles; also his Reasonableness of Christianity.

Sermons by Dr Clark of Boston.

Buckminster's Sermons, 2 vols.

A volume of Sermons, and a volume of Dissertations, by Dr Price.

Freeman's and Thacher's Sermons.

Sparks' Collection of theological tracts.

The tracts published by the American Unitarian Association.

Formation of the Christian Character. Character and Offices of Christ. Both of these are written by Henry Ware, Jr. Their titles will excite your curiosity; a perusal of them will reward it.

Paley's Evidences, and Natural Theology.

Butler's Analogy.

When you have read these, (which may be obtained in Boston) you will need no further assistance from, respectfully, your friend.

LETTER LV.

Dear sir,

When I had stated my reasons, why you should not use Scott's family Bible in your family, you wished to have me recommend some other work of the kind, which you could use instead of Scott.

* I think I should greatly prefer Orton's Exposition of the Old Testament. It is much shorter, and more free from error, though not entirely so. His reflections, at the end of each chapter, if I remember aright, would be generally very profitable. See that you do not read too long at a time. Many weary out their families by the improper length of these exercises. A long chapter, with copious or numerous reflections, and then a long prayer will do but little good. Be punctual, be earnest, be lively, be serious, be sufficiently loud and distinct; and be short.

This Orton published a volume of sermons addressed to the aged. How much erroneous doctrine there is in them, I have quite forgotten; my impression, however, is, that they contain very little that is objectionable. On the other hand, they contain much instruction, comfort and consolation very suitable to those advanced in years.

You may find, perhaps, some benefit from almost any commentary or exposition. I know of none, which has not faults; and some, very great ones.

I would advise you to omit purchasing any at present, and supply the place of them by different translations of the scriptures, where you can obtain them; and books, which shall help you understand them.

Read Josephus, and Hannah Adams' History

of the Jews. Get all the knowledge you can of the manners, customs and opinions of ancient, and especially eastern nations. Much of this information you will find in the Bible itself, if you study it faithfully. Procure Percy's Key to the New Testament; it will give you much instruction in regard to each of the books of the New Testament.

I will mention the titles of a number of books which you will buy, and read with your morning and evening devotions. Palfrey's 'N. Testament, in the common version, conformed to Griesbach's standard Greek text.' Noyes' 'Amended version of the book of Job.' There are many valuable explanatory notes connected with this work. These, with the corrections in the translation, render this ancient book much more intelligible to the English reader than it ever was before. I believe that this version has met with a kind and honorable reception, both at home and abroad, from scholars of different creeds and churches; an evidence of the accuracy and candor of the work.

Mr Noyes has published, also, a new version of the Psalms, with an Introduction which contains much important information. You will find the Psalms, in this new version, better fitted to enlighten your mind, and warm your heart.

Newcome's 'Observations on our Lord.' Also, a volume of Fenelon, lately published,

containing extracts from the writings of that eminent scholar and christian.

Sturm's Reflections for every day in the year will be a very profitable work to read. It has learning, philosophy, and piety, to recommend it.

Always when you read, make it your endeavour to command your attention and thoughts, so that these instructions may cause you to grow in wisdom and goodness. I may add to this list, and to these observations, at some future time. Till then, Adieu.

LETTER LVI.

Dear sir,

I pointed out to you many faults and errors in your hymn book. There is a very large proportion of the Psalms and Hymns, both in Worcester's and Winchell's Watts, which I should not read, were I to guide your devotions. They abound in statements of, or references to, doctrines, which have no good authority in Scripture. There is much poor poetry, bad taste, and unsound divinity in these collections. The same may be said of other selections by the orthodox, baptists, and methodists. I wish that more could be done for detecting and exposing these gross faults and errors, and for circulating among the people generally, poetry more wor-

thy of the title, 'sacred'—hymns, more worthy of the name devotional—and songs, that could, with more propriety, be called divine and spiritual.

I will here mention a number of hymn books, either of which would be preferable to the one you now use. Belknap's. Though this selection has many pieces which are useless on account of doctrine, yet there is a large number truly evangelical, and excellent. Dabney's, Sewall's, Lowell's, Greenwood's, and Willard's selections of Hymns for private and public worship, you will probably find more free from doctrinal objections, and much better suited, on the whole, to raise our thoughts and affections from earth to heaven. These, doubtless, have their defects, but they are small in my estimation, when compared with those I first spoke of, so full of hurtful errors. May God keep you in the way of truth!

LETTER LVII.

Dear sir,

The last time I saw you, I asked you if you had made a profession of religion? You answered, no; and when I asked the reason, you replied, 'you were not fit.' But why are you not? Why do you delay a duty so important? *If you are not settled in the faith, why do you*

not search the Scriptures, daily and pray and endeavor to understand what they and what you are required to believe? you are, now, a firm believer in the gospel. why do you not openly profess it? 'My not what it ought to be: I feel myself a Then, why do you not think of your sin feel sorrow? Why do you not repent of If you have not begun a christian life, I now. Do you pray frequently and fervently? Do you meditate? I fear you are neglecting these things; that you are putting off till a more convenient season. You make some trifling excuse for your present idleness and lull your fears to rest, by thinking many are in your condition, or a worse one, and that you shall attend to these duties when you die. Have you ever considered, that you may die soon, or under circumstances unfavorable to the performance of your duties? Perhaps very few have had the courage or frankness to converse with you on this subject. Perhaps no one has urged you so strongly. But you have been instructed at the desk, and taught also in the most plain and affectionate manner by your Saviour. you may think of and attend to these things now, is the prayer of your friend.

LETTER LVIII.

Dear sir,

When I urged upon you the duty of family prayer, you stated objections and mentioned difficulties. You might and ought to arrange and manage your temporal affairs differently. It is not your poverty, but your plenty and your eagerness for more, which occasion your hurry and disorder. God has spared and prospered you for a long season. Now remove all impediments, and piously and daily offer in the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer, praise and gratitude on the domestic altar.

You have another excuse. Your education and gifts are not such as to qualify you for the office of guiding the devotions of others. Indeed! You are ignorant then! You have not the learning and confidence to gather your wife and children and other members of your family around you, and read a chapter of the Bible, and then to offer a prayer to the God of your life. Think of such a confession, and what it implies! If you were as familiar with the scriptures as you should be, as frequent in private meditation on their truth, and communion with God; as thoughtful of religion, and of the spiritual welfare of yourself, and those under your roof; you would be able to perform these services in an acceptable and edifying manner.

If however, you are not satisfied with your own qualifications, and doubt whether you shall guide and comfort others, you can use the prayers, which learned and devout men have composed with a view to assist such as you in family worship. And should you feel any reluctance, any false shame, at the thought of being thus assisted? Remember that John taught his disciples to pray, and the disciples of Jesus requested him to teach them the same doctrine, and Jesus granted their request. You may piously and profitably use forms of prayer. Multitudes do so daily.

Such persons as Fenelon, Massillon, Pascal; Archbishop Leighton, Bishop Vossion, Bishop Butler, and Jeremy Taylor, recommended their prayers. I need not say, that these were gifted and gracious men. One of deep and steady piety does not necessarily grow cold or formal by using forms of devotions. I have no doubt, that those who discourage the use of liturgies, and prayer books, have done an immense injury to the cause of religion and piety. I would not recommend to you the Missal of the Catholics, nor the Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopalians, nor many other prayer books, which are in use. Many of them teach you to address your prayer immediately to Christ, or to the holy Spirit; whereas, Christ tells us to ask the Father in his name; to pray not to the Spirit, but to the Father, that

would give us the spirit. It is painful to notice how little attention even good and wise men have often paid to the instructions of the Saviour! By many of the prayers in some manuals of devotion, we should think that Jesus had taught his disciples, to make but little or no mention of the Father, but to offer their petitions immediately to him! Be wise and pious!

There are several prayer books, generally free from these objections, and others also of a doctrinal nature, which you may procure in Boston, I believe.

Brook's, Dabney's, and Sewall's prayers. You may be greatly benefited by either, and by all these. If you daily, faithfully, and devoutly use them, they will help to increase in you true religion and to nourish you with all goodness. That they may thus guide, assist and bless you is the fervent supplication of your friend.

LETTER LIX.

Dear sir,

You have frequently heard such charges as these brought against Unitarians. 'They deny and reject the Bible.' 'They have no Bible.' 'They have another, or a new Bible?' Many,

no doubt, believe these reports. They are circulated by persons, accounted orthodox and pious ; and many have no good opportunity to know the origin and truth of such reports. Before I went to the University, a man of some reading, but of little friendship for religion, told me that a large portion of Ezekiel was inserted by the translators. He had probably caught the story from enemies to Christianity ; and as I was ignorant of the language in which this book was written, the subject was dropped soon after he had made that assertion. I now know, that what he said was untrue. The words, which the translators inserted, are printed in italics to let the reader know, that they are not in the original. Some of these words were not necessary to give the sense of the text ; and some of them have obscured the text. But to return to the charges brought against Unitarians. You know that these charges are false. There may be those, who do not know that there was ever any translation of the Bible, except the one we have in common use. To say nothing of those translations, which have been made into other languages, there have been many translations, or versions into English, of the whole, or of parts of the Bible, besides the translation we have in common use. And these various translations of the scriptures have been made by men of various creeds and denominations. Catholics, Protestants, Church-

men and Dissenters, Trinitarians and Unitarians, Calvinists, Arminians, Baptists, Quakers, Methodists, to name no more, have translated parts or the whole of the Bible. It has long been known that the translation we have in common use, was not the work of perfect, infallible, and inspired men. All our commentators and expositors, and most of our clergy, tell us that many things might be corrected. Cotton Mather, the author of the 'Magnalia', prepared an amended version of the Bible for the press, in his day. And any one much acquainted with language, may easily discover many passages, which will bear, and which demand, a different translation. Unitarians, as well as Trinitarians, have known these things. Some of them have translated parts of the Bible; and others have used translations made by other denominations, and their opposers have taken advantage of it and accused them of having a new, or no Bible. You may find it beneficial to read different translations of the scriptures.

But though our common translation of the Bible was made by royalists, churchmen, trinitarians, and Calvinists, still we need not a new translation in order to state and defend our own sentiments. Our views are plainly taught now. The Lord our God is one Lord. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast

sent. My Father is greater than I. My Father is greater than all. All things are delivered unto me of my Father. But of that day....knoweth....neither the Son, but the Father. To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give. But why do I multiply quotations? I want not a new translation to encourage and support my views of religion. I want it because the Bible claims it, and because the poor and the ignorant might derive more light and comfort from it. Yours, &c.

LETTER XL.

Sir,

You told me of your troubles with a heavy heart. Your domestic peace is spoiled by your artful and obtrusive 'orthodox' neighbors. Your wife has left your place of worship and has gone to the Calvinists. You wished to have me converse with her and endeavor to bring her back. I am persuaded it will do no good. One who had never seen a college, nor studied divinity would probably have more influence with her. Your wife is an ignorant woman, not a scholar nor a theologian. 'What is not reasoned in, cannot be reasoned out.' I could bring her such arguments against the trinity and Calvinism, and in favor of Unitarian sentiments, as have satisfied the largest and best minds, and

the purest hearts. But they would have no effect on her. You remember the Roman Catholic servant girl. Let all the professors and doctors of Andover Institution go and converse with her on the absurdities, errors, superstitions, and abominations of Popery; do you think they would easily make a proselyte and protestant of her?

Your wife has given her faith and confidence to some religious guide. It is probably will, feeling, persuasion, enticement, that has drawn her away to another altar. You wish to have me resolve her cases of conscience; I suspect they might be resolved into something worse. You wish to have me remove her doubts; to clear up difficult passages of scripture; to explain doctrines. My dear sir, she has no doubts. Some partizan and zealot has told her that if she pursues such a course, she is safe, and will arrive in heaven; and she has determined to believe and trust that person, and let consequences take care of themselves. As to explaining scripture, I might as well explain to her Pindar or Horace. As to the doctrines of either one denomination, or another, she knows but little more about them than the child, that was baptised yesterday. She has got an impression, or formed a resolution, that such are right and all the rest are wrong. She could not state the doctrines of the church where she has gone, nor of the church she has deserted. \

might remind her of her marriage vows; of those duties of subordination and respect, which nature points out. I might direct her to the Old and New Testament---to the case of Vashti---to what was done to prevent the evil of her example. I might read to her the 30th chapter of Numbers---and many plain passages elsewhere---the instructions of Paul and Peter, who both wrote concerning the duties of wives to their husbands; but all this would do no good. The prophets and apostles may say what they will, she has chosen her guide, and will follow it. This is no flattering account of your wife. You will wish to know, what you shall do. This is a difficult question. Be more at home, and endeavor by a mild, but serious deportment, to sustain your dignity there. You may in a cautious and gentle manner make the visits of those who come to destroy your conjugal union and felicity, less frequent and mischievous. Be a more pious, prayerful Unitarian yourself.

You have not been so earnest, and thoughtful as you should be. If you are more faithful to your God, he may bring your wife to a sense of her duty. He will, at least, help you bear the evils of your condition. Do not follow her in joining that party. Show a higher regard for religion and for your Saviour. But daily strive to speak to her heart by your tenderness, piety and virtue; and wait patiently, and let it be your prayer that this trial may be sanctified to you; which is also the prayer of your friend.

LETTER LXI.

Dear sir,

I have often spoken to you concerning our sacred poetry. Probably many more would be induced to praise God in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, if they were more abundantly supplied with pieces in which good taste, divine truth, pious affections, and charitable feelings, were oftener found to prevail. The devotions of many are interrupted by the hymn. It teaches doctrines, or breathes a spirit, from which both our understandings and our hearts dissent.

It needs a skillful and judicious hand to compile or compose hymns to aid us in our devotions. The hymn book should furnish as few party and carnal weapons as possible, to those who might be disposed or tempted to a bad use of them.

You know the story of the clergyman, who read at the funeral of a person,

‘My thoughts on awful subjects roll,
Damnation and the dead.’

It was probably to gratify some unkind feelings towards the one who was then laid in the grave, or towards some of those who had gathered around it. Hymn books have often been perverted to such purposes.

But to drop this story---I thought, when I

began this letter, I would give you a number of quotations from hymns of such a character, that they would make a deep impression, and render further comments and reflections of mine unnecessary.

Here follow a few passages from Worcester's Selection.

‘ Though now an infant bathed in tears,
He called to form the rolling spheres,
And seraphs owned his nod.’

‘ Well may the earth, astonished, shake;
And nature sympathize;
The sun as darkest night be black—
Their Maker, Jesus, dies.
Behold, fast streaming from the tree,
His all atoning blood.
Is this the Infinite? ’tis he—
My Saviour and my God.’

‘ ———the Lord of all,
Thee, Saviour, by that name I call,
The great supreme, the mighty God.’

‘ As much, when in the manger laid,
Almighty ruler of the s’ky,
As when the six days work he made,
Filled all the morning stars with joy.’

I will now quote from other selections of hymns and songs.

‘And can you see the mighty God
Cry out beneath sin’s heavy load?’

‘They follow their great General,
The great eternal Lamb;
His garments stain’d in his own blood;
King Jesus is his name.’

‘A God for rebel mortals dies.’

‘’Tis I, the bleeding God replied.’

‘A smiling God.’

‘And now his God forsakes him [Jesus] too.’

‘The almighty three, the eternal one.’

‘Justice was pleased to bruise the God.’

‘Come saints, and drop a tear or two
On the dear bosom of your God.’

‘The rising God forsakes the tomb.’

‘Jesus the God with naked arms
Hangs on a cross.’

‘Did pity ever stoop so low,
Drest in divinity and blood;
Was ever rebel courted so

In groans of an expiring God ?

‘——heaven itself came down and bled
To win a mortal’s love.’

It would be easy to find materials for a volume of quotations, which gospel truth, the christian spirit, and good taste would discountenance and disown. May you sing with the spirit, and the understanding, and make melody in your heart unto God. So prays your friend.

LETTER LXII.

Sir,

You may recollect the interview, we had several months ago, and the topics of conversation, to which our attention was chiefly directed. You observed that the Unitarians and Universalists were one in sentiment; and wondered that they should keep aloof from each other, and that the ministers of these two denominations could not exchange. I denied the fact, that they were agreed in opinion; and before our conversation was ended, you had an opportunity to know, that, taking you and me as representatives of the two classes or denominations of Christians, (for I deny you not the christian name) there are many differences in our views of Christianity. I shall now give you

my thoughts more fully on the subject. I am aware, that Universalists often claim Unitarians, as belonging to them, and that those who have assumed the name, Orthodox, are as industrious as you, to induce the belief, that we are Universalists; thinking, no doubt, thereby to give our name a blacker and more ominous complexion, and to make our faith more odious and detestable.

I heard it was observed by a Universalist clergyman, sometime ago, that he would rather his children would be under the instruction of Calvinists, than of Unitarians. I think also, on inquiry, it will be found, that in many of our towns, where the inhabitants are of the three denominations, that not a few of the Universalists pay and attend at the Trinitarian and Calvinistic, instead of the Unitarian church. I think also, that it has been often asserted by the orthodox, that the Unitarians are worse, and more to be dreaded than the Universalists; how sincerely, heaven knows, not I.

It is also well known that the Universalists are not satisfied with the doctrine and manner of preaching of Unitarians; as, in many of our towns, where there is a Unitarian society, there is also a Universalist society formed. This is very strange, if there is that harmony of faith between them, so much talked of. Why was a Universalist society formed in Boston, Roxbury, Cambridgeport, Plymouth, Spring-

field, and in other towns, which might be mentioned, where there was already a Unitarian house of worship and a clergyman ordained? And where there is Unitarian preaching in a town constantly, and Universalist occasionally, why is it, that we see the Universalists so much more eager and punctual to attend the meeting, where one of their own denomination is expected to preach? Why is it, that on other days they are very indifferent about going to meeting, if there is only a Unitarian preacher; nay some of them are as careful to be absent, as Calvinists. Such things show plainly enough, that there are some either imaginary or real points of difference, which make them earnest to be known as Universalists in contradistinction from both Calvinists and Unitarians. My observation of such things, if I had known nothing more, would have led me to suppose that there was, some way or other, a marked difference between us. I shall proceed to speak of things which more and more confirm this supposition in my mind. The Unitarians, I believe, generally receive and inculcate the doctrines of a future retribution. I am told that many of them reject the doctrine of endless or eternal, but not of future misery. They generally hold that happiness or misery must be the consequence of actions,—the result of character; that the habits we form in this, will materially affect our condition in another world. Though they

are not so frequent in their appeals to the fears, nor in their warnings and threatenings, nor in their proving the certainty and endless duration of hell-torments, as some other denominations, yet I never heard them directly and professedly laboring to refute these doctrines. You know that their sermons are proverbial with the orthodox for something else. They are called 'good moral essays'--'good as far as they go.' If they were better acquainted with these sermons and with the gospel, and had just notions of vital religion, they would acknowledge, that a warm, an elevated, and habitual piety was taught also. I have received the impression from the little I have seen, heard, and read, that there was a plain difference between us, in regard to doctrines, and the relative importance attached to them; and also in regard to our public teaching. It is true, I have been present but a few times, where a professed Universalist preached. Only five times. One of these was nearly twenty years ago; and I have no recollection of the subject of the discourse. Another was an Election Sermon, and I remember not that the religious creed of the speaker was conspicuous in his sermon. The remaining three were doctrinal and controversial; direct attempts to disprove the doctrine of future misery. But, though I have heard so few myself, yet I have had many reported to me, not only by those who were opposed, but

also by those who were friendly ; from all which taken together, I have drawn the inference, that a large proportion of the sermons and lectures, given by Universalists, in our country towns especially, are, for scope, and substance, directed against any future misery at all, or against any after this life. I have thought, that these were among the principal and prominent objects, which the preachers of your denomination had in view—viz. to disprove the doctrine of future misery, and to assert and maintain that of universal and final salvation ; to allay all fear and banish all anxiety about one's safety in the world to come.

Now so far as my knowledge and observation extend, I have thought there was a plain difference both in the mode and the subjects of preaching between Universalists and Unitarians. I have thought there was more appearance of a serious and devout spirit in the services of the latter ; that the instructions of their sermons were more generally directed to the cause of virtue and piety ; urging upon their hearers, not only truths and doctrines, but their practical importance ; urging the various duties, which grow out of the various relations we sustain. They seem to me to make greater account of moral and religious duties and habits ; holding up faith as a practical principle, and happiness as connected immediately with piety and virtue. So practical was their preaching till fifteen or

twenty years ago, so opposed to controversy were they, so friendly to peace, charity and catholicism, that they were charged with concealing their opinions.

It has been a maxim with them that a good heart and a good character, were worth more in society, and in the sight of God, than peculiarities of opinion. For a few years past they have been more engaged in controversy. They have done it under an imperious sense of duty. And even in these times of division and discord, when they have been assailed with so much heat and violence by various sects, they still retain their former principles and character ; manifesting a conciliating and pacific spirit ; setting morals and piety above dogmatism ; and an active charity above an intolerant and blind zeal, or a disobedient and dead faith.

I believe you are not charged with concealing your opinions ; nor are such complaints brought against your sermons, as there are against ours.

I mark a plain difference in the works published, patronised, read and circulated by the two denominations. True, my knowledge and reading are very limited. I have, however, read a great many numbers of the *Trumpet* ; and not a few of other universalist periodicals, published in various parts of our country. Many of your clergy and some of your laymen have spoken to us through the press. I have had occasionally,

and have embraced the opportunity to examine their publications. I say nothing, now, of elegance of style, or soundness of doctrine. But when I contrast these publications and periodicals with those of Unitarians, I think I observe, not only wide differences in opinion, in reasoning, in the mode of defending and applying divine truth, and in the use of scripture ; but a much higher tone of moral and religious feeling. I wish that we were much less faulty in this respect ourselves. Excepting a hymn book, or two, I know of no work of your denomination, which could properly be called moral, practical, and devotional. I would not insinuate that there are none ; but they have not come within my reach. The works, that I see, are generally doctrinal—controversial ; giving new explanations of passages of Scripture, relating to the devil, to hell, to judgment, to retribution, to punishment, to future misery, &c. &c. And the tendency of them generally seems to be—to produce boldness, fearlessness, and indifference in regard to one's future condition. I trust there is sincerity and piety in many of the Universalists. I am persuaded, there are kind and generous hearted men, good neighbors and citizens among them. Still they seem to me to be sadly deficient in the duties and exercises of vital religion. I think highly of those duties we owe to our fellow men ; I see their reasonableness founded in our nature and condition ; their

importance to the welfare of society; and that they have the authority and sanctions of the Christian religion. But I remember also, that our Saviour has taught us, ' he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me ; ' ' he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me ; ' and that the first and great commandment of all, is, to love God with all the heart, soul, strength and mind. It has seemed to me, from observation, that the Universalists were not so serious, thoughtful and prayerful ; that they regarded not the sabbath, the positive institutions, and ordinances of religion, the scriptures and books of devotion, and the means of grace and virtue generally, so highly as Unitarians. I acknowledge, with sorrow, there is a deplorable want of attention to these things among ourselves; but there seems to be a still greater among you. If I am not correct here, I desire to know it.

Though you have so much to say about a future state, yet there seems to be a great deal of confusion, and a great diversity of opinion about it. One builds his hope of salvation on the decrees of God, or on election and predestination; another, on his goodness; another, on the atonement; another, on the paternal character of God. Another tells us, that our entrance into the spiritual world will resemble our entrance into this; that there will be no more consciousness, nor remembrance of our earthly life and char-

acter then, than there was of a state of preexistence, when we were born into this world. So no motive to virtue and piety is drawn from futurity; no motive but from the reasonableness, convenience, and present benefit of them. I would not say that you meant to weaken moral ties and restraints, and undermine the foundations of piety; but only that your doctrines, and your manner of exhibiting them, have seemed to occasion and encourage a great deal of vice, sin, and irreligion. You will say, perhaps, 'The fault is not in the doctrine.' It is somewhere; and demands inquiry and carefulness. I know I might apply much of this to your 'orthodox' neighbors. Their way of stilling conscience, of making a great amount of sin and corruption consistent with a state of grace and salvation; their manner of avoiding hell and getting into heaven, are to me very questionable. I believe that God possesses moral attributes, and that the way to heaven is a way of virtue and holiness. We may generally expect most error and passion in extremes. I suppose there are thousands who are Universalists, who never would have been so, had every orthodox preacher made it his care not to be wise above what is written, and to speak the truth in love. But when one busy man represented hell, as containing so vast a multitude of infants, and of those whose greatest crime seemed to be a want of mental powers, or of knowledge; it is

not strange that another should be found, whose genius and indignation would carry him to the opposite extreme; who in his eagerness to release the innocent from torment, would set at liberty those who were suffering condign punishment.

When one exhibited our heavenly Father as a God of vengeance, unmingled wrath, and despotic sovereignty; it is not surprising that another should be found, who would give such views of his character and requirements as to render it a matter of very little importance whether men believed in his existence or not.

I have thought, sir, that if your doctrines are errors, and their prevalence an evil, much of the errors and evil might be traced to the ignorance, imprudence, or uncharitableness of the orthodox. •

Sir, I have not approved of the feelings, the language, or the conduct of other denominations towards yours. They often seem to forget, that you have feelings and rights and privileges as well as they; and that it is as hateful to see an orthodox protestant injuring and persecuting his brethren, as to see an orthodox papist doing the same. Sir. I am willing that your denomination should enjoy all the rights, privileges and advantages, which belong to them.

But I dislike bigotry, obtrusiveness, meddling, and any thing that is contrary to equity; candor, and charity among you, as well as among *your orthodox brethren*. I think I could see

a Baptist, a Methodist, a Calvinist and Universalist, each with his face turned to a different church, without any sentiment of anger, ridicule, or scorn. But let them go peaceably. But to return.

From what I have observed of the two denominations, I can see a reason, why there should not be an interchange of ministerial labors. I say the same in regard to Calvinists. I mean those who are strenuous in maintaining their peculiarities; who make their points of difference prominent in their devotional exercises and in their sermons; and who think them of too much consequence to be passed over in silence a single day or hour. I am willing that such should have churches and pastors by themselves. I wish not to exchange with them. I should expect no benefit from such a step; but rather an injury to the cause of religion, and to the reputation and usefulness of those who did so. Charity does not require that we make shipwreck of our own faith, or treat it with indifference; though it does teach us to respect the faith of others. The consequence of such an interchange of labors, I suspect, would be, that the hearers would become captious, fastidious, dogmatical, skeptical, disputatious, opinionative, confused, unsettled;---among the various plausible, and contradictory opinions, they would fix upon none. The real design of religion would be frustrated. They would learn to put no confidence in any

religious teacher, nor in the truth of Scripture itself. We might exchange, if we could be entirely silent about differences of opinion, when we stood in each others' desk. But if we were thus silent, what special need of the exchange? On the other hand, if each, or either embraced that opportunity to refute what he deemed the errors, and to destroy the influence and usefulness, of him who had shown this courtesy, any one might see that such a course would be very unwise and unprofitable. Had I Universalists in my society, I would endeavor to treat them with respect and tenderness, and make it my care to give them no just cause of offence; I would not call them infidels and deists for not believing just as I did; nor mark them out from Sabbath to Sabbath, as persons to be abominated and despised. If they were candid, I should hope to edify and comfort them. If they were serious and religiously disposed persons, and wished to join my church, I would bid them welcome. I would admit professors of their denomination to the Lord's table, and baptise their children. I would endeavor to treat thus the members of other denominations, who might find it convenient or desirable to join my society. But I should not expect they would ask me to exchange with their ministers. It would only prepare the way for strife and division. If they would not be satisfied with this course, I would *relinquish my place, and they might fill it with*

one, who rated the humble pittance of a clergyman above christian truth, and christian character. Very different has been the situation of many Unitarians in orthodox parishes. They cannot have their children baptised; they cannot be admitted as members of their churches, and communicants with them. Their minister in his grace, blessing, doxology, prayer, hymn and sermon, either by ignorance or design, or in some other way, grieves, disgusts or shocks him. He is often treated with great rudeness and indignity; and has no room to forget that he is an alien and an outcast.

On the whole, I have sometimes doubted whether this community of parishes, flocks and pulpits, was beneficial. Say that farmers, merchants, doctors, lawyers, instructors of youth, governors of states, should pursue this course. Disorder and evil would be the result most generally. Happy would it have been for thousands of churches, had the 'angels' of them been without either wings or feet; and just able to preach from week to week the apostolic, evangelical, and truly orthodox sermon, **LITTLE CHILDREN, LOVE ONE ANOTHER!** Excuse me; I feel interested in my subject. It claims a great deal more attention than it has ever yet received. People forget what they should go to meeting for. With many, it is to gratify curiosity, not to worship God. These *exchanges* do not a little to keep up an excite-

ment; to perpetuate false views of piety. They go to meeting for the sake of the man; their God, their Redeemer, the Bible, the salvation of their own souls, are objects which scarcely come into their minds. A minister who is worthy of a parish, ought to remain chiefly at home. When a stranger takes his place, how many may suffer by it! There are the faint hearted, the wavering, the tempted, the anxious, the sick, the afflicted;—there are many such cases always, which a faithful minister ought to know, and ought to be able to manage better than a stranger. Too many think of a minister, as only a person who is to come one day in a week into a certain place, and deliver an elegant prayer and an eloquent, ingenious, original, classic discourse. They want something *new*, as Demosthenes and Paul both told the Athenians they did. They but poorly understand what a clergyman should be and do. They do not consider that it is his duty to ‘preach Christ crucified,’ and to exhort them to take the cross against all the delusions, follies, vanities, errors and sins, of the world, and become pure in heart, holy in life and conversation, the humble and obedient disciples of Jesus.

But why am I saying these things to you—a stranger to the duties, the cares, and trials of our profession?—I fear also a stranger to the exercises and joys of a pious heart and a religious life! You appeared to me like one of

those, who love to talk and dispute; but I think and feel very little of the importance of religion, or of their own obligations to God. Sir, you are already in the wane of life. How much good you have done, I know not. I ought to have been doing good continually, advancing the cause of virtue and religion. You have attended a great deal to doctrine. Let me advise you now to be alive to the duties they imply and teach. You are not happy now. Your lips, your eyes, your whole countenance, told me so. You want a penitence, a pious, a believing and grateful heart; a subdued temper, a spiritual mind, a good conscience, and a lively hope. Be more frequent in looking into your own breast; in meditation on the devotional and preceptive parts of scripture, in thinking of your Saviour; in communion with God. That you may so take your chance here, as to have a crown hereafter, is the prayer of your well-wisher, &c.

LETTER LXIII.

Dear friend,

As we were speaking of the Shakers, some time ago, you wondered that they could consent to such a life. But could you know facts, circumstances, as they are, the mystery would be revealed. Let me tell such a story,

uppose might often be told, with some little variations.

A gentleman, his wife, and children, passing through a Shaker village, were prompted by curiosity to stop their carriage, and get out to see them. The gentleman was rich, his wife elegant and accomplished; his children well-behaved and beautiful. He was known on 'Change,' and she in the most brilliant circles. They were neither irreligious nor proud. They went to church; they were observed at times in the dwellings of the poor, and some of their choicest wines found a way into the chambers of the sick.

They called at the office, and were received with such urbanity, as the faith of a Shaker will allow him to show to a man of the world. There was a striking contrast between the appearance of those who were getting out of the carriage, and that of those who opened and gave them entrance. The children were all eyes and ears; so were their parents. The brother and sister of the office led them out to see the buildings, shops, machines, farms, and then took them into the gardens. They asked questions, and the Shakers answered them. The lady and her female guide strayed into a remote part of the herb garden; and then the lady began to express her sympathies and sorrows for the condition of her hostess. 'I would not live here were I you.' 'Neither would I,

were I you,' said the Shakeress; and her eyes began to swell, as though they would have wept.

But those fountains were low. She had drawn from them often and long. Niobe and Laocoon do not weep in marble. But though she was tearless, her heart was full of grief, and her pale face told you of unforgotten afflictions. The lady looked on her with intense interest. The question and scrutiny overcame she Shakeress at first; but she soon gathered strength and assumed a more dignified air and tone.

'You wonder at my choice. It was not choice, but necessity. You think, I forsook the world! The world forsook me. I was born in poverty, and doomed to servitude. My parents died when I was young. I worked hard for a scanty subsistence, till eighteen; and then, hearing of this people, fled to them for protection. Their doors were opened to me, and I entered and found rest.

'I once lived with the rich, fashionable and gay. My food, my clothes, my bed, told me I was a menial. The language of my employers told me the same daily. Here I found wholesome food, clean and tidy raiment, and was hailed by every one as a sister. I had not been taught religion. I lived among Christians, and close by the house of God; but I had no decent dress, or no time. They had prayers in the family, where I was sometimes; but I was getting breakfast, or taking care of the children. They had

Bibles, but they were sealed to me. I knew there was a God, and good men; but ignorance kept me from a throne of grace; and my servile condition kept me from the society of the generous and humane.

‘The kindness of these people excited my gratitude and won my heart. I could easily repose confidence in those, who had showed such charity. They who had taken such care of my body seemed qualified to watch over my soul. They taught me religion. I soon joined with them in the song and the dance. You think our religion superstition and error; but it supports me here; and gives me hope of a hereafter. It is the religion of those who have been kind to me, and it is mine also. Why would you draw me into the world again? What motive can I have? Will the world treat me as kindly as I am treated here? Would you take me into your family, and call me sister?’ The lady was saved from answering the question by the approach of her husband and children. They thanked the Shakers for their civilities and rode off.

Not a few of the Shakers have become such from misfortune, disappointment; or from a visionary, fanciful mind; not from conviction, and long investigation. A person is afflicted and deserted. He goes to the Shakers, and finds consolation and friends. Another is poor and has a helpless family. They must go to the almshouse, or be

put out to service. He prefers the decent and quiet life of these shakers. A poor deluded girl becomes the mother of a child. It is given to the shakers. Did you know the history of these people you would find they are generally the sons and daughters of sorrow. Did you know more of the world, you would not wonder that so many had sought this asylum, but that so few. A pity it is, that other places of refuge cannot be opened to such beings, where they would have all these temporal and social blessings, and be trained up under the influence of a religion, more plainly taught in the gospel. Thank God for your condition, and try to meliorate that of others. Yours.

LETTER LXIV.

To A. H.

Dear friend,

I write often now to atone for my long silence. If I send you a dozen letters at once, you need not read them in a day. And if you do, you will not lay them by never to be read again.

You mentioned to me one book in the Bible, which had not the name of the Supreme Being in it. But what of that? His hand, his providence, is legible in every page of it. A feast of gratitude is instituted in commemoration of

the signal events there recorded, and the wonderful deliverance wrought for the Jews.

The pure in heart can see God even where his name is not written. View your own form. Walk in your garden. Every plant and flower will tell you of him. Look at the stars; look at everything. The word, God, is not on the leaves of the lily; but does it not tell you most eloquently, that his hand has given it beauty and fragrance?

You said the book of Esther wanted that name. I told you there was another book without it; and you could not tell which. I was the first to inform a very respectable clergyman, that the name of God was not to be found in Canticles. I did not tell you; for you had not read Hebrew, and he had; and I wished to keep your curiosity excited a little longer. Perhaps, if you find it before this letter reaches you, you will ascribe my refusal to disclose the secret, to modesty, or delicacy. No. That book is in the Bible, and I believe it has been abused both by saints and sinners. The former have spiritualized it too much; the latter have turned it to a worse account. It is not so low and vulgar, as low and vulgar minds often make it. There is no unchaste sentiment, no obscene expression, and no unlawful passion encouraged in it. We must remember that it was not written lately and in our own country; but three thousand *years ago, and in the East.* I will not say how

much it aids one's devotions; but it need not enkindle unholy desires. It is not the language of libertinism and sensuality. It breathes a chaste and virtuous love; and such is capable of ardor. There are many passages of Scripture, which may cause a blush, excite a smile, ridicule, and unhallowed thoughts; but the thoughts must have been already corrupted, and the imagination polluted. Learn to overcome and resist every such temptation, by calling to mind the holy doctrines and precepts of the gospel. Blessed are the pure in heart.

There is a counterfeit to everything good and true. A false hope, a false fear, a false shame. Some are ashamed of Christ, and some glory in their shame. There are portions of scripture, which need not be read aloud in the house of God, nor in families. One acquainted with the Bible and with religion, will easily discern them. Yet when you do read any chapters, and words occur which may possibly be the occasion of vain and sinful thoughts in the minds of others, do not hope to mend the matter by omitting or altering the word; by hesitating or pronouncing it in a low and hurried voice. It will defeat your purpose, and produce the opposite effect. No. Read it in that solemn and reverential manner, which shall check imagination and fancy, and give piety the ascendancy over them. Speaking of reading the Scriptures leads me to a kindred topic—devotion.

In your devotions, as in everything else, let the Saviour be your pattern. His prayers are generally short, artless, comprehensive—suited to the occasion and circumstances. He calls God, Father. He uses the language of faith and piety. The prayers, which we often listen to, discover a fastidious taste and a prurient ear; and speak of a heart panting after human glory and worldly applause, rather than after the living God. When you pray, think of your mercies, and also of your sins; think of your friends and enemies; of the poor, the afflicted, the sick and the sinful; and let a fervent charity and a holy love kindle your devotions into a pure and steady flame.

‘He shall save his people *from* their sins.’ The practice of many professed Christians says, he shall save his people *in* their sins. The Shakers talk of travelling ‘out of sin.’ Paul says, shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! Yet many talk of their indwelling and daily, numberless sins, as though they were consistent with a state of grace, and with their hope of salvation. Endeavor to grow stronger in the Lord, and in every virtue! Christian virtue implies not only a warfare, but a victory. That you may gain it and be crowned, is the prayer of your friend.

LETTER LXV.

My dear friend,

You recollect the conversation, we had Sunday after meeting, respecting the sermon I had just delivered. I hope you have often thought of it since, and are more and more reconciled to the sentiments advanced in it. I cannot tell you in words, how glad I was to find, on my third visit to P., that you were one of my constant and attentive hearers. I was glad to see you join in our worship. I knew it must be peculiarly grateful to your husband, and to others, who highly regarded you. I knew also it was among the last desires of one whom neither of us shall forget. But these were not my only reasons for gladness. I thought you now more in the way of your dignity and duty, as a faithful and affectionate wife; and in a situation more favorable to your growth in grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. My prayer is, that you may continue to attend the Unitarian meeting, and that you may there be edified and comforted. May many others be encouraged by your example to pay some regard to the feelings and counsel of those who sustain the nearest relations to them. It is painful to think, how much discord, coldness, distrust, and strife, prevail now *in families*—in how many instances domestic

peace and happiness are spoiled by a bad use of religion, which should make every house a Bethel and a house of mercy. It is painful to think, how many daughters and wives are enticed and lured away—their hearts alienated from those whom nature and grace teach them to love; their minds filled with prejudices and disrespect towards those the most justly entitled to their regard and confidence. How much grief, sorrow, and despondency, these things cause! How many men, disappointed, perplexed, indignant, enraged—have laid the blame, where they ought not to have laid it. They ought not to hate and reject the gospel, that breathes a spirit of peace, love, mercy and charity. Let them judge justly!

As soon as a church is formed, I hope you and your husband will join it, and become worthy communicants at the Lord's table. You know the needed preparation,---charity to men, penitence for sin, faith in Christ, piety to God, sincere desires to remember, love, honor, and obey your Saviour. Let it not keep you back, because some will join and partake, whose life is not so holy and exemplary as it should be. Pray for them, and by your example and influence endeavor to make them more fit for these duties. Be thankful to God that they think even so much of religion. Remember that our commemorating the death of Christ is not an evidence that we are already perfect, but rather of

holy desires and resolutions to be conformed to him in temper and in conduct. We cannot always draw the line of distinction correctly between the worthy and the unworthy. We must leave that to Him who knows the heart. I must think that many have very wrong views of this ordinance. They suppose, that the person who is admitted to it, must have arrived at a state of grace and goodness, beyond the reach of imperfection or failing. But you know that this is contrary to fact. Many church members walk disorderly and unworthily;—and so do those who are not. And the difference between them lies here; the church member owns his obligations, professes his faith, and obeys the dying command of the Saviour; and perhaps he also thinks of and bewails his sins; while the other, who is out of the church, though he is under the strongest obligations to do the same, yet does them not.

It is a painful sight to witness any one acting inconsistently with his professions, and contrary to duty. But let it not deter us from doing our own. Let it be a motive to prayer, charity, patience and perseverance. Be watchful, lest pride enter your heart. Some give us reason to think, that they neglect these ordinances because they feel above them; or account themselves, in some way or other, purer and better than those who belong to that church! But whether the church be large or small; compos-

ed of the poor and ignorant, or of the intelligent and rich; containing many who are cold, lukewarm and careless, still you may, even there, banish your shame, and profess your faith in the Lord Jesus, and own yourself a member of *his* church. And if those who are around you, mortify and discourage you, think of the many good Christians there are elsewhere, to whom you are allied; and of the general assembly and church of the first born,—to which may you finally belong! I say these things to you more freely now, because I am not expecting ever to labor among you again. I consider our views of Christianity agreeable to the gospel, and therefore, I pray for their prevalence;—favorable to virtue, piety, ceaseless joy; and I pray that they may be yours!

LETTER LXVI.

To Dr Watts.

My dear Watts,

Why should I not write to you and express my feelings and thoughts, just as if I knew you among the living on earth; or as though this letter could visit you in the world of spirits? Let me indulge myself in this pleasing illusion: *It cannot injure you, and it will be a gratification to me.* You left this sublunary, mortal

scene before my birth. But though an ocean separates the places of our nativity; and a century and a tomb seem to increase the obstacles to our intercourse; yet have I a fellow-feeling for you, as though you were by me and my friend. I have read your life; and many of your writings are familiar to me. These things have endeared you to my memory, and strengthened my attachment to you. I was but a poor little village boy, when I first got a sight of your 'divine songs for children'—divine they were in my eye; though I now perceive errors in them. They were exposed for sale in a shop; but I had not a sixpence in the world, and I went away with an aching and longing heart. But an elder brother had the money; and that pearl, within a few days, became our own. I read it with rapture. You would have been pleased to see us enjoying this mental and moral feast. I never shall forget that day. It scarcely required an effort of memory to treasure up those beautiful hymns. They delighted and impressed my heart. No doubt, before your departure, there were many children, that had learned and loved this little book.

But you would be glad to know how many millions since, not only in Europe, but in America also, are repeating those hymns. What a satisfaction must it be to you that you have enlightened, warmed and nourished so many youthful minds! If you could look down from your

celestial abode, and hear so many feeble and lisping voices chanting your strains; if you could hear so many pious and affectionate mothers, expressing their fond solicitude, and lulling their pretty babes to sleep with singing your cradle hymn; and then could you enter our churches, and find your psalms and hymns lying in every pew;—O, it must delight you! I have compared you with some of the poets of the present day, who are by too many accounted greater poets than you. But how awful are the manifestations of their superiority of genius! The wise and pious father will not give their works to his child, any more than he would give him a stone for bread, and a serpent for a fish. And no careful mother would recommend them to her pure and delicate daughter, any more than she would deliver her into the hands of the libertine. I often think of these things, and call your rank an enviable, a glorious one. Johnson thought it presumptuous to write your life, and give you the lowest place in the scale of the muses. Perhaps it was his love of singularity and obstinacy, that made him speak with so much decency, as he did, concerning you, and your literary merits.

But the voice of time, and unadulterated nature have done you justice. Youthful innocence, and virgin purity, and holy affection, have all ranged themselves on your side. Some of *those poets, whom Johnson praised, are but little*

read and known. They are locked up in libraries, as interdicted fruit, and the worm is feeding sweetly on them, and they are covered with the dust of time.

Johnson, doubtless, would have done differently, if instead of trying to assist men in singing the praises of God, you had taught them to sing the praises of his church; or employed your genius and time on a subject of less importance. But I suspect you had, while living,—you certainly have now, some learned, and many pious persons for your admirers; and many also are imitating you in devoting their talents and their muse to holy purposes.

We have taken the liberty to alter many of your hymns, because we have different views of the doctrines they inculcate. We have lately found a letter of your own, which expresses your disapprobation of some of your earlier performances. If there were errors in your creed, you will be glad to find them corrected; if not, you will look with a charitable and pitiful eye on us.

I do not approve all your poetry. You would suspect me of flattery, if I said I did. I leave out many of your psalms, and more of your hymns; not thinking them proper helps to a Unitarian's devotion. I think you one of the best men that ever lived; but your goodness did not make your opinions certain and true. I was sorry for the mention you made of Locke

in one of your Lyric Poems ; but I trust, that 'fair charity, sister of faith,'* and yet greater, has, long ago, showed you that excellent man, and that you have embraced him in all the ardor of spiritual love. I imagine, I can see plainly by your writings that you had a tender and benevolent heart; and that if language of seeming severity and harshness fell from your lips, it is to be attributed to that deep interest you felt in the cause of true religion, and the welfare of immortal souls. Your Sermons, Treatise on the Passions, Guide to Prayer, Improvement of the Mind, Solemn Address to the Deity, Orthodoxy and Charity united, are still printed and read with much avidity. Your Solemn Address, and your Orthodoxy and Charity united, I have read with great pleasure and profit. We often sing your Indian Philosopher, and sympathise with that sorrow, which, we imagine, was the occasion of it. Some of your hymns are in the Roman Catholic Manual. We all get something from you. I trust you are now reaping

*See his poem on Mr Locke's 'Annotations upon several parts of the New Testament.' I allude to these lines—

'Sister of faith, fair charity,
Show me the wondrous man on high'—

implying much doubt, whether that excellent man was in heaven; and that doubt was occasioned by a supposed error in Mr Locke's faith.

the rich reward of your humble piety, and your very useful life.

I am hoping to have the privilege, sometime of seeing you, where I can tell you much better, than I can now, with what high and affectionate regards I am your friend.



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